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The pink revolution in Iran and the “Left”

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Introduction

It is obvious today that the huge propaganda campaign that was launched about four years ago by the transnational elite¹ (roughly, the “G7”) and the Zionists, as well as by the international mass media controlled by them, to discredit and destabilise the Iranian Islamic regime, as a first step towards regime change, either from within or from without, has entered a new critical stage. As I will try to show in this brief book, this campaign is of enormous importance to the elites, and the system of the internationalised market economy and representative “democracy” as a whole, given that the establishment of a client regime in Iran will change not only the entire map of the Middle East and beyond, but would also open wide the road to impose the New World Order, from Latin America to North Korea. It is, therefore, utterly important to examine systematically the recent events in Iran and show the role of the reformist Left in supporting this campaign, directly or indirectly.

However, the fact that today the duty of the antisystemic Left (to differentiate it from the “anticapitalist” Left only in its rhetoric, whereas in reality it never questions explicitly the system of capitalist market economy and representative “democracy”) is to fully support the fundamentalists of the Islamic revolution in their fight against the transnational elite and its acolytes does not imply that we have to support uncritically this regime. This is surely an irrational theocratic regime and its struggle against the transnational elite and the New World Order focuses on the cultural aspects of globalisation rather than its political and economic ones. This, has many important implications as regards its inconsistent antisystemic stand with respect to the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as its contradictory domestic economic policies, apart, of course, from the (inevitable for a theocratic regime) irrationalities at the cultural level.

Therefore, the aim of this book, is to draw a clear line from both that of the transnational elite and its acolytes in the reformist Left (who, essentially, adopt the same line on account of the regime’s irrational nature and its violations of human rights etc), as well as from the line of some in the Left, who uncritically support the regime in view of the bigger conflict involved with the transnational elite. In other words, for the Inclusive Democracy (ID) approach, although it is imperative for everybody in the antisystemic Left to support the Islamic regime– in view of the almost cataclysmic social and political implications at world level which will follow a regime change in Iran imposed by the transnational elite and the Zionists– we are fully aware that this is just a tactical alliance with a regime which has nothing to do with the ideals of inclusive democracy and autonomy that we support. Yet, the necessary precondition for the road to a genuine democracy to open is the political (and if possible economic) independence of a country from the transnational elite. And it is this very political independence of Iran which is at stake now and not the violation of some human rights by the Islamic regime, as the propaganda of the

¹ On the definition of the transnational elite see Takis Fotopoulos, “Globalisation, the reformist Left and the Anti-Globalisation ‘Movement’”, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol.7, No.2, (July 2001)
http://www.democracynature.org/vol7/takis_globalisation.htm

transnational elite and the Zionists, followed by the reformist Left and a rhetorical anticapitalist Left asserts, disorienting, confusing and in the end, neutralising, thousands of people in the Left all over the world!

Chapter 1. The culmination of the campaign for regime change in Iran

The build-up of the campaign for regime change

The campaign to discredit and destabilise Iran did not start with the recent demonstrations and the supposed “stealing” of 11 million votes from the reformist opposition. This is just the culmination of a campaign which began almost as soon as the Islamist reformers lost the presidential elections in 2005, after a long period of reformist governments that followed the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, the father of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The campaign began with the creation of a new ‘bogey’: the threat of a nuclear Islamist regime –not unlike the bogey of the weapons of mass destruction supposedly possessed by the Iraqi regime!– which could possibly engage in a campaign to ‘annihilate’ Israel. However, the fact that the Iranian regime will never be in a position to really threaten Israel, given that it is only the US/Israeli formidable military machine which, potentially, could annihilate a country today, is conveniently ignored. Similarly, in a kind of black propaganda, the Iranian regime was presented as calling for “Jews to be thrown to the sea”, whereas Iran not only hosts the biggest Jewish community of any country in the Middle East apart from Israel,¹ but also all its rhetoric amounted to (even taking into account some politically incorrect Ahmadinejad’s expressions) was simply stressing the need to fight a racist ideology, Zionism², and a regime based on it. Yet, the fight against Zionism was a long standing goal of the antisystemic Left (Jew and non-Jew), before the Zionist and pro-Zionist Left became hegemonic within the Left at large and achieved their aim of eliminating the issue of Zionism from the Left’s agenda. Furthermore, the very fact that Zionist Israel is the only country in the area possessing nuclear weapons (whereas the Iranians are far away even from the stage of producing a single such weapon!)³ is handily ignored, despite the fact that the problem of nuclear weapons proliferation could easily have been solved by adopting the proposal to destroy the nuclear weapons and infrastructure of every country in the area, including of course Israel—a proposal which is not even discussed by the transnational and Zionist elites!

So, in the past few years, we had a repeat performance of the campaign which led to the invasion of Iraq. The UN Security Council passed repeated resolutions condemning the Iranian regime for its nuclear activities (even though no sufficient evidence has ever been produced about these activities really aiming at anything

¹ Robert Tait, “Iran’s Jews spurn cash lure to emigrate to Israel”, *Guardian*, 13/7/2007

² See Takis Fotopoulos, “Zionism and the transnational elite”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol. 2, No..4 (November 2006) http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/newsletter/vol2_no4_zionism_transnational_elite.htm; see, also, “Palestine: the hour of truth”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol.2, No..2, (January 2006) http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol2/vol2_no2_Takis_Palestine.htm

³ Unlike Israel, Iran is a signatory of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It is interesting to note that three countries besides Israel have not signed on, out of which two are client regimes (Pakistan and India), the third is North Korea.

more than nuclear energy production)⁴ thanks to the insistence of the transnational elite and the pressure it could exert on China and Russia. On the former, because it is being fully integrated into the internationalised market economy and is therefore fully dependent on Western multinational corporations for its “miracle” of economic growth.⁵ And, on the latter, because it is keen to be integrated into the closed “club” of the most significant world powers, whereas, at the same time, it is shrewdly offered by the US elite a package involving the withdrawal of the US anti-missile shield in Poland, Ukraine etc, in exchange for Russian support in the developing campaign for regime change in Iran.⁶ Therefore, sanctions have become increasingly punitive over time, whereas the propaganda campaign against the Iranian regime for its violations of human rights against women, gay, prisoners and so on had intensified.

Then, came the presidential elections of 2009, with the bourgeois modernizers in Iran and their backers in the transnational elite doing everything they could to have Mousavi, the candidate of reformist Islamists, elected for the reasons we shall examine below. The election campaign itself went smoothly, with even heated televised debates allowed between candidates in which some very serious accusations against each other were launched. However, at the very moment the transnational elite was expecting that the “Obama effect” would influence the Iranian voters in a similar way that it did the Lebanese voters, who in the latest elections showed a trend to move somehow away from Hezbollah—which is one of the liberation movements supported by the Iranian regime—Ahmadinejad won a comfortable victory against Mousavi. This was the point at which the misinformation campaign against the regime took off.

Thus, the “progressive” president Obama, followed by the entire “democratic world community” (i.e. the transnational elite), with the critical support of the reformist Left (i.e. the Left which is not questioning the system of market economy and representative “democracy”), rose against the violations of human rights in Iran in relation to the “stolen elections”, the suppressing of the opposition demonstrations and the blood shed by the theocratic regime. It should therefore clearly be attributed to the severe colour blindness, from which it seems our leaders in the transnational elite and the mass media controlled by it suffer, that the same people :

- can only see “stolen elections” in Iran but are blind to the results of the Palestinian elections in January 2006, which were recognised by everybody as fair, and yet, they were rejected with laughable pretexts by the transnational elite and, consequently, the people of Gaza were condemned to starvation,

⁴ As recently as October 2007, IAEA Director General El Baradei reported that IAEA inspections had not found any evidence that Iran was making nuclear weapons, (http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/29/content_6968976.htm) and Russia also confirmed in November 2007 that it had not seen any evidence of Iran trying to build a nuclear weapon <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/10/10/2056296.htm>

⁵ See Takis Fotopoulos, “Is sustainable development compatible with present globalisation? The Chinese Case”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October 2008) http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol4/vol4_no4_takis_chinese_case.htm

⁶ See Takis Fotopoulos, “Transnational elite and Russia: a new bipolar world?”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol.4, No..4, (October 2008) http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol4/vol4_no4_takis_russia.htm

simply because they voted “the wrong way”;⁷

- can only perceive the violent suppression of demonstrations in Tehran but not in London at the G20 meeting, or in Strasburg at the NATO meeting a few months ago;
- can only see the violations of human rights in Iran but not in their own client tyrannical regimes in Egypt or Saudi Arabia –not to mention the regular Zionist massacres in Palestine– the latest one in January of this year;⁸
- can only hear the shootings of a few civilians in Iran but not the mass killings of civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan or Pakistan!

Yet, despite the fact that no one can deny the mass character of some of the anti-regime demonstrations (something that could be expected given the broad range of people who attended them, from reformist Islamists up to bourgeois modernizers–see below) these demonstrations were restricted mainly to the Tehran area and were never comparable in massiveness to those attended by pro-regime supporters. It was this fact which presumably led the BBC (yet again!) to be caught engaging in mass public deception by using photographs of pro-Ahmadinejad rallies in Iran and claiming they represented anti-government protests in favour of Mousavi! Thus, an image used by the *L.A. Times* on the front page of its website showing Ahmadinejad waving to a crowd of supporters at a public event was used by the BBC News website as a story covering the election protests, but with Ahmadinejad cut out of the frame, and the caption, ‘supporters of Mir Hossein Mousavi again defied a ban on protests’.⁹ Of course, as soon as the truth about the misrepresented images surfaced, the BBC changed the photo caption on their original article but, given that this is far from the first time in which the organisation was caught distorting the truth, this was clearly not an error. Anyway, its biased reporting in favour of the Zionist cause on the Palestinian issue, for instance, is notorious, forcing even an independent review commissioned by the board of governors of BBC itself to conclude a few years ago that its coverage was “misleading”.¹⁰ In fact, BBC’s reporting on systemic causes (the wars of the transnational elite, Israel etc) is not just misleading and the corporation has been caught frequently red-handed using crude image and video framing techniques to promote the systemic view. Thus, during the fall of Baghdad in April 2003, the BBC and other systemic mass media broadcast closely framed footage of the “mass uprising” during which Iraqis, aided by U.S. troops, toppled the Saddam Hussein statue in Fardus Square. The closely framed footage was used to imply that hundreds or thousands of Iraqis were involved in a “historic” liberation, but when wide angle shots were later published on the Internet, (which were never broadcast on live television), the reality of the “mass uprising” became clear: the crowd around

⁷ See Takis Fotopoulos, “Democracy” in the New World Order”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol. 2, No.4 (November 2006)
http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/newsletter/vol2_no4_democracy_new_world_order.htm

⁸ See Takis Fotopoulos, “The Crime of the Zionists and the Transnational Elite and the Stand of the Left”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Spring 2009)
http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol5/vol5_no2_takis_crime_of_zionsts.htm

⁹ Paul Joseph Watson, “BBC Caught In Mass Public Deception With Iran Propaganda”, *Infowars*, 18/6/2009 <http://www.infowars.com/bbc-caught-in-mass-public-deception-with-iran-propaganda/>

¹⁰ Owen Gibson, “BBC’s coverage of Israeli-Palestinian conflict ‘misleading’”, *Guardian*, 3/5/2006

the statue was sparse and consisted mostly of U.S. troops and journalists--with even the BBC admitting that only “dozens” of Iraqis had participated in toppling the statue!

The pattern followed by the transnational elite to achieve the regime change in Iran is not however the same with that adopted for Iraq, given that an invasion of Iran is practically inconceivable, even for the USA, apart from the fact that it could politically backfire turning bourgeois reformers and reformist Islamists against the USA. So, it seems that the tactic used now is the one successfully implemented for regime change in Serbia¹¹. Thus, in Serbia, the division between West-oriented modernisers on the one hand and nationalists and socialists, on the other, were successfully exploited by the transnational elite which, with the help of mass NATO bombings to enhance the position of the former and terrorise the latter, achieved its aim of regime change. The propaganda war which preceded it and which was faithfully reproduced by NGOs for human rights and the entire reformist Left and its analysts (including the new fellow travellers of the Left, i.e. the post-modern “anarchists”), was focused, as at present, on the supposed huge violations of human rights by a tyrannical regime –an event which, according to the ideology of neoliberal globalisation, justified the limitation of its sovereignty and, implicitly, the need for regime change. Similarly, the Iranian regime today is accused of suppressing a peaceful revolution of the Iranian people in order to maintain its power by force.

The present pink revolution in Iran

What sort of revolution was the recent one in Iran? First, one would wonder why, if the movement against the present Islamic leadership was hegemonic, as its supporters in the West claim, comprising the vast majority of the population, it was so easily squashed by the regime, with no use whatsoever of any of the army’s persuasive weaponry including tanks. As an authoritative analyst described the suppression of the demonstrations:¹²

It is worth noting that most of the firing of live ammunition by the security personnel seems to have been in the air. That explains why the fatalities in the massive and repeated street protests in Tehran have remained relatively low, totalling 15, according to official sources, which also claim that eight Basij militiamen have been killed. Media reports generally have cited 17 deaths of protestors so far, though rumours of higher death tolls abound.

Second, a comparison of a genuine revolution, like the 1979 revolution which

¹¹ Takis Fotopoulos, “The New World Order in Action: From Kosovo to Tibet”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol.4, No..3, (July 2008)

http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol4/vol4_no3_takis_ftom_kosovo_to_tibet.htm

See, also, “The First War of the Internationalised Market Economy”, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 5, No.. 2, (July 1999) http://www.democracynature.org/vol5/fotopoulos_balkans_2.htm

and “Milosevic and the distortion of the history of Yugoslavia’s dismembering”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol. 2, No..4 (November 2006)

http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/newsletter/vol2_no4_Milosevic.htm

¹² Dilip Hiro, “The Clash of Islam and Democracy in Iran”, *ZNET*, June 30 2009,

<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21826> This article first appeared on

Tomdispatch.com, a weblog of the Nation Institute. Dilip Hiro is the author of five books on Iran, the latest being *The Iranian Labyrinth: Journeys Through Theocratic Iran and its Furies* (Nation Books)

dismantled the tyrannical regime of the Shah, with the present “revolution” is very instructive. The revolutionary process against the Shah’s regime, which was heavily protected by a lavishly financed army and security services (with the massive support of its Western friends), began in January 1978. As soon as the first relatively minor demonstrations erupted with some hundreds of Islamist students and religious leaders in the city of Qom protesting over a story in the government-controlled media, the army was sent in to disperse them, killing in the process scores of students. The demonstrations continued throughout that year in each major city of Iran culminating in the December 1978 demos, when on December 10 and 11, a “total of 6 to 9 million” anti-Shah demonstrators marched throughout Iran, an event which, according to a historian of the revolution, “even discounting for exaggeration may represent the largest protest event in history.”¹³ If one takes into account that even the greatest revolutions in Europe, the French Revolution of 1789 and the Russian Revolution of 1917, may have not involved much more than 1% of the population and that in Iran more than 10% of the country marched in anti-Shah demonstrations on these two December days¹⁴—which shortly afterwards led to the overthrowing of the regime—a good idea of what a real Iranian revolution means could be derived!

What about violations of human rights under Shah’s regime, which was blessed by the Western elites—the same elites and their acolytes who are so vocal in condemning the Islamic regime violations? Here is an extract from Robert Fisk’s book *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*,¹⁵ which gives a good idea of the kind of regime supported by the West, as long as they are ready to serve their purposes—in this case, to dispose of their natural resources at a handy profit for the Western oil companies:

Reporters such as Derek Ive of the Associated Press had managed to look inside a Savak agent’s house (note: Savak was Shah’s secret police which, according to Jesse J. Leaf, a former CIA analyst on Iran, was trained in torture techniques by the CIA) just before the revolution was successful: “There was a fishpond outside,” he told me. “There were vases of flowers in the front hall. But downstairs there were cells. In each of them was a steel bed with straps and beneath it two domestic cookers. There were lowering devices on the bedframes so the people strapped to them could be brought down on the flames. In another cell, I found a machine with a contraption which held a human arm beneath a knife and next to it was a metal sheath into which a human hand could be fitted. At one end was a bacon slicer. They had been shaving off hands.” Derek Ive found a pile of human arms in a corner and, in a further cell, he discovered pieces of a corpse floating in inches of what appeared to be acid. Amid such savagery was the Iranian revolution born.

Having said this, no one could seriously deny the silly restrictions on human behaviour imposed by a theocratic regime like the Iranian one (although, of course, had the same power been given to the Christian, Jewish or any other clergy in the

¹³ Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, (Harvard University Press, 2004), p.122

¹⁴ *ibid.* p. 121

¹⁵ Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London: Fourth Estate, 2005)—the extract is reproduced in his article entitled “I saw a mesmeristic Islamic uprising turn to savagery”, *Independent*, 10/2/2009

world the results would have been the same, if not worse, as historical experience has amply shown!) nor of course the fact that any state suppression of demonstrations would inevitably involve various degrees of brutality, as the political elites all over the world very well know! The same applies to the violations of human rights in general by the same regime, although one wonders what sort of a nerve the Zionist regime should have to raise this accusation against Iran, when its own human rights violations in Palestine, as well as the discriminations against the Arab natives within Israel itself, do not bear any comparison, quantitatively and qualitatively, with the Iranian ones! So, the point is not—as the transnational and Zionist elites' propaganda attempts to present it—the violations of human rights by the Islamic regime, but what the role played by it is with respect to the role played by the elites which control the present World Order—which is the aim of the following chapter.

Chapter 2. The dual conflict in Iran

To explain the recent events in Iran one should go back to the early 1950s when the nationalist leader Mossadeq was overthrown by an Anglo-American coup, which was launched (not unlike today!) with massive demonstrations in Tehran that were paid by the CIA, as it was revealed by itself!¹ The Shah's regime – which, with massive support, in terms of security equipment and training, by the Western elites and especially the US elite, lasted for over a quarter of a century– was one of the most tyrannical regimes in history, managing to amass against it an enormous grassroots movement consisting of Islamists, modernizers, as well as supporters of all sections of the Left, from reformist Left up to revolutionary Left and Guevarists. However, given the balance of power prevailing at the time, this mass movement gave the power to the Islamists under Ayatollah Khomeini. This was not surprising if one takes into account that by the end of the 1970s the socialist movement in general was in decline and that the repression of the fiercely anticommunist Shah regime was mainly directed against the communist Left, making easier for the popular anger against the regime to be expressed through the mosque.² At the same time, the clergy had every reason to turn against the Shah's regime, which was blamed for its systematic attempt to modernise the country through a process of Westernisation and secularisation, readily adopted by the flourishing middle strata of the bourgeois class and utterly rejected by the lower social strata, which have benefited very little, if at all, by the modernisation process and the huge oil revenues which were pocketed by the oil multinational companies and the ruling elite in Iran.

So, the present events in Iran could fruitfully be explained in terms of a dual conflict:

- the first conflict refers to the old struggle between the West-oriented modernizers (mainly from the upper and middle strata of the bourgeoisie) and the Islamists;
- the second conflict refers to the new struggle—which developed within the regime itself following the death of Ayatollah Khomeini—between fundamentalists of the revolution and “reformists” (or, as the transnational elite and the media controlled by it put it, between “conservatives” and “progressives”!)

The old conflict between Islamists and bourgeois modernizers

The first conflict characterised the entire period following the Second World War and intensified after the establishment of the Shah's regime, in proportion to the parallel emergence of the “Islamic revival”, i.e. the revival of the Islamic religion throughout the Muslim world, which began roughly sometime in the 1970s as part and parcel of a general movement towards irrationalism that in countries in the periphery like Iran,

¹ Dr. Donald N. Wilder, “Overthrow of premier Mossadeq of Iran: November 1952-August 1953,” *Clandestine Service History, CS Historical Paper No. 208* (Date written: March 1954, Date published: October 1969) <http://web.payk.net/politics/cia-docs/published/one-main/main.html>

² See Dilip Hiro, “The Clash of Islam and Democracy in Iran”

but also in the semi-periphery like Greece, and the centre like USA, took the form of religious irrationalism, for the reasons I explained elsewhere.³

It is therefore clear that the Islamists who took over in Iran were not the usual brand of (irrational) conservatives, who constitute the religious zealots all over the world, but were playing in fact a role similar to that of “liberation theology” in Latin America, which tried to combine the humanistic preachings of Christianity with the socialist principles of social justice—inevitably drawing the condemnation of the church hierarchy, which, as has always done, played the role of supporting the status quo, directly or indirectly legitimising it in the eyes of the oppressed peoples.

Thus, the “first generation” Iranian Islamists around Khomeini declared not only the need for a theocratic regime but also, and principally, the need to break the dependence on the West, which implied a policy of support for the national liberation movements against the transnational elite in the Arab world and elsewhere. Thus, Khomeini became a “champion of Islamic revival” and unity, emphasizing issues uniting Muslims e.g. the fight against Zionism and imperialism. Furthermore, he embraced international revolution and Third World solidarity, giving it precedence over Muslim fraternity. No wonder that from the time Khomeini's supporters gained control of the media until his death, the Iranian media “devoted extensive coverage to non-Muslim revolutionary movements (from the Sandinistas to the African National Congress and the Irish Republican Army) and downplayed the role of the Islamic movements considered conservative, such as the Afghan mujahidin.”⁴ At the same time, his aim seemed to be that Iran should play the role of a “third pole,” independent from both the Eastern and Western blocs.

But, even at the economic front, the Islamic revolution under Khomeini systematically attempted, mainly, through social benefits and social protection, but also through major nationalizations, to achieve a redistribution of economic power and wealth from the new bourgeois class (which was created by the Shah and was inspired by Western values of human rights, etc.) to the lower social strata. Thus, immediately after the 1979 Revolution and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) –which was instigated by the transnational elite in its first attempt to smash the Islamic regime⁵– over 80% of Iran's economy came under state control in a kind of social market economy combining central planning with a socially controlled market economy. As an extensive academic study on the Iranian economy shows⁶:

³ Takis Fotopoulos, “The Rise of New Irrationalism and its Incompatibility with Inclusive Democracy”, *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 4, Nos. 2/3 (issue 11/12) double issue, (1998)
http://www.democracynature.org/vol4/fotopoulos_irrationalism.htm

⁴ Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, (Harvard University Press, 1994) p.175

⁵ According to a court statement by a former NSC official, President Ronald Reagan decided that the United States “could not afford to allow Iraq to lose the war to Iran”, and the United States “would do whatever was necessary to prevent Iraq from losing the war with Iran (see statement by former NSC official Howard Teicher to the U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida –cited in the wikipedia entry on Iran-Iraq war). This policy was formalized by Reagan who issued a National Security Decision Directive (“NSDD”) to this effect in June 1982.

⁶ *Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, "Revolution and Redistribution in Iran: Poverty and Inequality 25 Years Later"*, Department of Economics, Virginia Tech (Version August 2006)

The revolution's leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, repeatedly declared that the revolution belonged to the disinherited (*mostazafan*) and the barefooted (*paberehnegan*), and promised large scale redistribution of income and wealth. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran is quite explicit in committing the government to provide for the poor. Article 29 considers it a person's right to have access to "social protection in retirement, unemployment, old age, disability, which the government is committed to provide"...Perhaps the most gain in the quality of life for the poor has been in access to basic services, such as electricity and safe water. These improvements in welfare are closely related to improvements in health, fertility, and education outcomes which have been documented elsewhere...Wide ranging expropriation and nationalization in the name of the poor helped qualify the 1979 change of regime as a social revolution.

The conclusions of this statistical study—based on extensive survey data in unit records on household and individual expenditures for a thirty year period extending from before the 1979 Revolution to 2004—are that "the comparison of economic welfare for the poor before and after the Revolution shows a general improvement with much lower poverty and no increase in inequality". Furthermore, publicly provided basic services, such as electricity and safe water, have made it possible for the poor to own home appliances and for public health and family planning services to reach poorer rural and urban areas, whereas Investments in public health have resulted in substantial declines in infant mortality and lower fertility. The study shows that poverty has declined substantially compared to the years just before the Revolution, and that the poverty rate (defined as the proportion of individuals under \$2 per day) has been in the single digits in this decade, which is quite low by the standards of developing countries, and one-eighth its rate before the Revolution. The proportion of individuals under \$2 per day is 7.2 percent in Iran, which is lower than in Malaysia, Mexico and Turkey, whose average incomes are the same or higher than Iran's. Not surprisingly, Iran's poverty rate is considerably lower than the poorer countries of China, Egypt, India.

The economy of Iran, according to Article 44 of the Constitution, was divided into three sectors—state, cooperative, and private—and was to be based on systematic and sound planning. The state sector included the publicly owned and administered sectors that would comprise all large-scale industries, power generation, foreign trade, the banking sector, the communication sector, etc. The cooperative sector included cooperative companies (*Bonyads*) and enterprises concerned with production and distribution, and the private sector consisted of those activities concerned with construction, agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, trade, and services that supplement the economic activities of the state and cooperative sectors. However, the private sector, particularly under the reformist administrations, kept expanding all these years at the expense mainly of the state sector.

Therefore, the fact that the economy was neither a socialist one, nor a proper market economy system, inevitably led to serious problems with an initial sharp rise in absolute poverty. This was intensified by the "flight of human capital", i.e. of the privileged social strata under the previous regime of entrepreneurs, professionals, technicians, and skilled crafts people (and their capital!) who emigrated en masse after the revolution and the Iraq-Iran war, and began to return only after the reformists took over, following the end of both the war and the Khomeini era. It is not

therefore surprising that students—usually the offspring of the privileged social strata— and bourgeois women living in the luxury northern Tehran suburbs, played a leading role in the recent demonstrations, which were massively promoted by the Western media. As far as women are concerned in particular, it is worth noting that despite the Western black propaganda about the deterioration of the place of women in society, in fact, Iranian women have only one main similarity with Afghan women under Taliban: the authoritarian Islamic restrictions on their clothing. Otherwise, the social position of Iranian women has been vastly improved under the revolution, as shown by the fact that more than 62% of new university entrants are women and that 62% of women in rural communities can read and write (compared with 17% in 1976).⁷ The overall literacy rate jumped from 58% to 82%, with the figure for females – 28% in 1979 – tripling, and with the total of university graduates, which stood at 430,000 in 1979, growing nine-fold since then.⁸ And yet, the transnational elite and its acolytes in the reformist Left dare to talk about the authoritarian nature of the Islamic regime at the very moment when they are blessing (or keep quiet about, respectively) regimes which are equally if not more authoritarian, like that of their friend Mubarak in Egypt, which hardly have any similar record to show on social spending!

The new ‘internal’ conflict between revolution fundamentalists and reformers

The second conflict is intra-regime and began immediately after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. It is a conflict between, on the one hand, the revolution fundamentalists who declare their determination to keep the regime within the contours defined by the revolution both at the political and the economic level (not accidentally, Ahmadinejad, since his first election in 2005, has moved quickly to solidify his political base into a wider social movement which was described as “the second wave” of the Islamic Revolution) and, on the other, the “reformists”. The latter want to maintain the Islamic regime, (from which they get too many benefits!) turning it however into a kind of Shia Saudi Arabia, namely, into a fully integrated part of the internationalised market economy—an essentially client regime of the transnational elite..

Today, the fundamentalists are expressed by the majority of senior clerics, who in turn determine the policy to be followed on external and internal matters not just by the president Ahmadinejad but even by the supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei, the successor of Khomeini.

The “reformers” are expressed by Ayatollah Rafsanjani (who became very rich thanks to the revolution of '79), the former reformist president Khatami and part of the clergy, who—with the full material and moral support of the transnational elite and the international media controlled by it— backed their chosen Mousavi in the elections. Musavi is an opportunist who, as prime minister from 1981 to 1989, had a reputation as a hardliner radical who was close to Ayatollah Khomeini and backed

⁷ Bernard Hourcade, “Iran: a spring of change”, *Le Monde diplomatique*, February 2004

⁸ Dilip Hiro, “The Clash of Islam and Democracy in Iran”

the system of extensive state control favoured by his mentor⁹ but who turned today to a reformist, sensing that this is where the wind now blows! Mohsen Makhmalbaf, the film director and now Mousavi's spokesman, put it, perhaps inadvertently, right when he said: "Previously, he was revolutionary, because everyone inside the system was a revolutionary. But now he's a reformer. Now he knows Gandhi – before he knew only Che Guevara".¹⁰

As regards the transnational elite's stand with reference to the dual conflict, there is no doubt that its ultimate aim on Iran is a client regime controlled by the bourgeois modernisers, which would replace the Islamic regime. However, it seems that recently the same elite, exploiting to the full the "Obama effect", have adopted a strategy of "regime change by stages" and only if this proved unsuccessful they would proceed to military action (possibly through its Zionist bulldog) with the aim of immediate regime change. According to this phased approach, in a transitional phase, the transnational elite would accommodate itself with a reformist Islamic regime, which would adopt a more conciliatory position on the nuclear issue and, particularly, would cease supporting the national liberation movements like Hamas, Hezbollah, Jihad etc., (unsurprisingly, Mousavi's campaign was critical of the level of support given to Hezbollah and Hamas!)¹¹ on the hope that their inevitable wear would open wide the way to the bourgeois modernisers in the next stage.

So, following the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, there have been profound changes in the Iranian institutions and values, which have been associated, first, with the presidency of Rafsanjani (1989-1997), who advocated a free market economy and pursued an economic liberalisation policy, and then continued under the presidency of another reformer Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005). It is worth noting at this point that although Khatami stood in the 1997 elections as a reformist, yet he beat the Supreme Leader's candidate in a victory which, as characterised by an ex Iranian parliamentarian, would have been unthinkable in most of the Middle East, where only the official candidate ever wins".¹²

The neoliberal policies introduced by Rafsanjani (1989-1996) and continued by his successor Khatami (1997-2005) marked the gradual shift of the social agenda from distribution to growth. The reforms, which included the privatisation of state-owned businesses and the liberalisation of overseas trade, encouraged people "to grow rich and build the economy, leading to a curious confusion of state and private sectors – and to the impoverishment of the least well-off".¹³ Thus, the majority of Iranians have been hit by a decade of financial crises, dwindling buying power and increasing money problems. At the same time, the moral values that used to predominate, especially religious ones, have lost ground and a minority emerged who were not

⁹Simon Tisdall, "Iran's old rivals renew their battle", *Guardian*, 18/6/2009

¹⁰ Mohsen Makhmalbaf, "I speak for Mousavi. And Iran", *The Guardian*, 12/6/2009

¹¹ Seumas Milne, "These are the birth pangs of Obama's new regional order", *Guardian*, 18/6/2009

¹² Ahmad Salamati Iran's stolen election, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 2009

¹³ Ramine Motamed-Nejad, "Iran: money and the mullahs", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, (English edition) June 2009

afraid to display their wealth—an attitude that was encouraged by the government of President Rafsanjani in the early 1990s, which invited Iranian entrepreneurs who had gone abroad to come home and rebuild their country.¹⁴ As Rafi-Pour, an Iranian writer concluded, “values based on materialism and wealth have triumphed”.¹⁵

The economic reforms, although specifically encouraged private enterprise, failed to significantly privatise the economy, presumably under pressure from the fundamentalists who prevented any significant reduction of the considerable level of social protection offered through subsidies and the labour market. The overall effect of these reforms, therefore, was as Ramine Motamed-Nejad points out¹⁶ that:

the state has withdrawn from many branches of the economy, so this is not a form of state capitalism. Nor is it market capitalism. It's more like monopoly capitalism, since these groups can sidestep fiscal, commercial and financial constraints while making it difficult for new entrants to gain access to the market.

However, as it was to be expected, the neoliberal reforms also created a new economic elite. Thus, a 1994 parliamentary report found that ownership in more than 50 companies had been transferred to their directors for nominal sums, in contravention of legal requirements. Furthermore, this process of transfer of ownership was made possible through loans from the National Industries Investment Company – in other words, it was public money which made the former directors of state-owned companies de facto members of the new economic elite. Similarly, the liberalisation of foreign trade became another source of huge profits, with a merchant elite being created of importers and exporters, the former controlling the import and distribution of food, manufactured goods and pharmaceuticals, and the latter exporting some of the country's energy production – which is still supposed to come under the monopoly of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). Needless to add that the new elite created by the regime have formed large industrial, commercial and financial holdings, exploiting also the financial privileges they have been granted by various public and semi-public institutions. Clearly, this new elite had every reason to promote Mousavi in the last elections and it obviously played a key role in this process.

At the other end of the social scale, the neoliberal reforms introduced by Rafsanjani and Khatami and particularly the privatisations have led to a significant rise in open and disguised unemployment— as everywhere in the world— and, in the Iranian case, to a parallel sharp rise in inflation. Unemployment, as usual, was the result of capitalist efforts to improve competitiveness and profitability at the expense of labour (despite the pro-labour legislation that the Islamic revolution had introduced). Thus, as the same academic study mentioned above put it¹⁷:

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Faramarz Rafi-Pour, *Development and Contrast: Essays Analysing the Islamic Revolution and Social Problems in Iran*, Entechâr Publishers, Tehran, 1998 (in Persian)—quoted by Ramine Motamed-Nejad

¹⁶ Ramine Motamed-Nejad, “Iran: money and the mullahs”

¹⁷ *Djavad Salehi-Isfahani, "Revolution and Redistribution in Iran: Poverty and Inequality 25 Years Later"*

When the economic reforms began in the early 1990s, about 60 percent of wage and salary workers were employed in the public sector, compared to 40 percent in 2004. Public sector jobs offered more security and were coveted often despite lower pay. Labour market regulations intended to make private sector jobs more secure have failed in practice as employers have shifted to offering short term contracts and part time work. Significantly, an early move by the Ahmadinejad government was to prevent short term employment contracts in state owned companies. The reform of foreign trade in recent years, which ended non-tariff barriers and lowered the average tariff rate, have increased competitive pressures from East Asia on some sectors of Iran's economy, notably textiles, and reduced job security for lower skilled workers. These competitive pressures have worsened with increase in oil revenues which have opened the gates to cheap imports from East Asia.

On the other hand, inflation was the inevitable result of the regime's attempt to combine various administrative controls on the markets (which were introduced by fundamentalists for social policy purposes, mainly, during the Ahmadinejad period) with the neoliberal reforms (which were introduced, mainly, by the reformers during the Rafsajani-Khatami periods with the aim to liberalise the markets), despite the intrinsic incompatibility between administrative controls and neoliberal reforms. Furthermore, the economic sanctions—imposed initially by the US regime since the Tehran embassy hostage crisis almost 30 years ago but recently expanded and extended by the entire UN security council, after the transnational elite had managed to force Russia and China to toe its line on the nuclear issue— are increasingly having an impact on inflation.

No wonder that in the 2005 presidential elections the lower social groups moved away from the reformists. Here is how Alexandre Leroi-Ponant described the process in *Le Monde Diplomatique*¹⁸— not exactly a radical newspaper, which keeps calling the revolution fundamentalists “conservatives”!:

Under Mohammed Khatami's two presidencies (1997-2005), the upper and middle classes had prospered. A fixed US dollar exchange rate, soaring house prices and civil service pay rises in a country with a bloated public sector all contributed to their prosperity. But inflation shot up to about 20% and the poor grew poorer; as their purchasing power evaporated they were lectured on the merits of a “dialogue of civilisations”. A de facto alliance between the poor and the conservatives coincided with a return to hardline Islam and resulted in the election of Ahmadinejad, who had attacked the rich and promised a better life for the poor. The poor and the conservatives also had the support of Ayatollah Khamenei, who believes that the reformists advocate secular policies and oppose Iran's guiding principle of *velayat-e faqih*.¹⁹

Clearly, the supreme leadership of Khamenei was hardly compatible with Rafsajani's

¹⁸ Alexandre Leroi-Ponant, “Iran's new power balance”, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 2006

¹⁹ The doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of jurisprudence) gives enormous powers to the mullahs and was at the centre of Ayatollah Khomeini's thought, albeit contested by many other Ayatollahs.

and Khatami's reformist presidencies. This, despite the fact that, Khamenei as president under Khomeini from 1981 to 1989, was known as an economic liberal and a proponent of a stronger private sector, but as successor to him in the post of supreme leader after Khomeini's death in 1989, he has emerged as an arch-fundamentalist with strong anti-Western views.²⁰ It is not therefore surprising that Khamenei, who was opposed at both legislative and executive levels by the reformists, was determined to get control of legislative and executive power, something that he achieved after the 2004 parliamentary elections and the 2005 presidential elections with the election of Ahmadinejad, which were not disputed at the time, presumably because the transnational elite had not yet consolidated its position in Iraq, as at present. When, therefore, Ahmadinejad took over the presidency in 2005 he launched a far-reaching reorganisation of power in the state machine in a kind of purging of the reformists—a fact that could easily explain their present anger when the recent elections did not produce the result that would bring them back to power, as they expected.

At the same time, the new middle class, as long as it was profiting from the high oil prices during the first Ahmadinejad presidency, kept quiet. However, following the eruption of the present world crisis and the consequent tumbling of the price of oil, they felt free to express their anger against the fundamentalists whom they blamed for the deterioration of their economic position.

On the other end, although the living standards of the underprivileged have also fallen, their poverty is not comparable with any other country in the region, including India, Afghanistan and Pakistan. A significant factor for this is the state's distribution network, and the state subsidies on oil, bread and some other staples.

²⁰ Simon Tisdall, "Iran's old rivals renew their battle",

Chapter 3. The 2009 elections

The two sides in the June 2009 elections

The conflict between revolution fundamentalists and reformers was expressed as follows in the June 2009 presidential elections:

On the one side, Ahmadinejad was expressing the revolution fundamentalists, i.e. the original anti-imperialist and anti-Western ideals of the Islamic revolution, which became even more topical in the last few years with the essential encirclement of Iran by Iraq and Afghanistan (where large numbers of Western troops are based for an indefinite time), as well as Pakistan and Turkey—all client regimes of the transnational elite at present. Furthermore, the collapse of the former Soviet Union has led to the creation of new central Asian states on the borders with Iran that are also, in various degrees, client regimes of the transnational elite. So, Iran faces, also, a string of American bases with potential or actual nuclear stockpiles in Qatar, Uzbekistan etc. No wonder that the Iranian regime and its supporters believe that the West intends to eliminate it and that therefore the only way to avoid regime change is by having a nuclear capability. Unsurprisingly, even reformists have to pay lip service to the need for nuclear energy, although both Mousavi and Rafsanjani have expressed their willingness to find a negotiated solution with the transnational elite and Mousavi, in his first press conference since the start of Iranian New Year in March 2009, has said that "if elected, his policy would be to work to provide "guarantees" that Tehran's nuclear activities would never divert to non-peaceful aims". Despite therefore his rhetoric that he will never halt enrichment, he made it clear that a reformist administration will never use the enriched uranium for making nuclear weapons. But, this is an effective surrender of Iran's right to have nuclear weapons in the face not only of Zionist Israel, their greatest enemy, having already built a significant nuclear arsenal, but also of the client regimes of Pakistan and India in their area, not to mention USA, Russia and China! No wonder that Ahmadinejad's condemnation of US policy and Israeli hegemony in Lebanon, Egypt, North Africa and Pakistan, as well as his support for Hamas and Hezbollah, has gained him much sympathy among ordinary Arabs and (indirectly) among ordinary Iranians. It is only the bourgeois reformers (including the reformist Left) who want regime change –I am not referring here to the marginal communist and leftist groups which usually are fully confused, if they do not play a suspicious role like the Iraqi communists, who welcomed the American invaders!

On the other side, there were the reformers, with "the super-rich Rafsanjani, his family and his supporters in the reformist Kargozaran Party, making no bones about helping to finance and direct Mir Hossein Mousavi's campaign to topple

Ahmadinejad”.¹ The reformers were promoting the demand for more political and social “openness”, i.e. more secularization of culture, more equality between sexes, disbanding the so-called morality police force etc. This was an obvious attempt to shift the focus of discussion away from two crucial issues on which the fundamentalists had a clear advantage: the question of liberalisation of the economy and the question of Iran’s political independence. On the former, although both fundamentalists and reformers accepted the goal of liberalisation of the economy and, as late as 2006, Khamenei decreed a renewed effort to privatise the economy, Ahmadinejad had attempted throughout his presidency (through administrative controls of the markets and subsidies) to improve the lot of lower social groups, i.e. to redistribute income from the rich to the poor. On the latter, Ahmadinejad, unlike the reformists, had consistently shown adherence to the original anti-Western ideals of the Islamic revolution.

Of course, neither the fundamentalists nor the reformers ever managed to break the heavy economic dependence of Iran on oil and gas revenue. The economy of Iran is still dominated by oil and gas exports, which constituted 50-70% of government revenue and 80% of export earnings as of 2008. This, combined with the fact that agricultural production has been steadily falling since the 1960s, in a traditional rural society like Iran, implied that by the late 1990s Iran had become a major food importer, while economic hardship in the countryside had increased massively the migration of people to the cities.

In other words, the Islamic regime aimed only at achieving political independence from the transnational elite but not economic independence as well, which however, is the basis of any long-term genuine independence. In fact, the present development strategy of Iran, as expressed by the latest Five-Year Economic Development Plan (2005-10), is the one suggested by the transnational elite, i.e. a model of export-led growth! This is presumably what the new generation of technocrats who studied at Western universities and returned home suggest (most of them supporters of reformists). However, despite the fact that both revolution fundamentalists and reformers use the same economic strategy, the very fact that reformers leave the distribution of income to the market forces, whereas fundamentalists, both in theory and in practice, aim at improving the distribution of income in favour of the poor, played a crucial role in the electoral outcome. This is not new, because exactly the same happened in the 2005 presidential elections, as Mark Gasiorowski,² a professor of political science and director of international studies at Louisiana State University pointed out:

The landslide victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the second round of Iran's presidential elections was largely a response to the populist campaign he had waged. His campaign emphasised the large gap between rich and poor in the country, the rampant corruption that exists there, and his own humble lifestyle. His victory was a rejection of the preceding era, under Presidents Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami, when this poverty gap grew

¹ Simon Tisdall, *Duel between shark and supreme leader may decide who is the country's kingmaker*, *Guardian*, 16/6/2009

² Mark Gasiorowski, *The real power in Tehran*, *Guardian*, 29/6/05

wide.

This, combined with a genuine policy of political independence, again expressed both in theoretical and practical terms during the presidency of Ahmadinejad, could well explain his victory in 2009, which was widely predicted, even as early as 2006. As Nasser Hadian-Jazy, a professor of political science at Tehran University said at the time:³ "He's more popular now than a year ago. He's on the rise...I guess he has a 70% approval rating right now." The same trend was confirmed very recently, with fundamentalists winning 70% of the seats in the 2008 parliamentary elections, an event which disturbed the transnational elite which began to realise that sanctions were not enough to make Iranians toe its line.⁴ It is also interesting to know that the very reasons for which the fundamentalist government was so popular were anathema to reformists, as it became clear in a report by 50 prominent economists who accused the president of recklessly deterring foreign investment, running a state-dominated, over-centralised economy, and causing a national brain drain. "The government is mismanaging the economy and wasting oil revenues. It's worse than under the Shah," said Mohammad Atrianfar, the founder of *Shargh*, a leading pro-reform newspaper and political ally of Mr Ahmadinejad's main rival, former president Hashemi Rafsanjani.⁵ And the reason for this waste? According to Atrianfar again: "oil revenue was being squandered through state handouts to impoverished provinces and commodity subsidies!"⁶ However, it was exactly these "handouts" which gave victory to Ahmadinejad, as a report a few months before the elections concluded:

"although all this looks like a Farsi version of 'it's the economy stupid', Ahmadinejad's troubles may not be terminal. He is popular in the countryside and small towns for the projects and cheap loans he has funded with oil money, just as he promised. What plays badly in affluent north Tehran is applauded in rural Baluchistan, where his views on Jews or 'global arrogance' are no more than plain speaking from a man who sounds like 'one of us'".⁷

The 'unholy alliance' of reformers and bourgeois modernizers

It is clear that since the recent elections an "unholy alliance" emerged consisting of

³ Ewen MacAskill and Simon Tisdall, "A year on, Ahmadinejad's popularity is soaring", *Guardian*, 21/6/06

⁴ Julian Borger, "Conservative wins in Iran poll show sanctions are failing, say analysts", *Guardian*, 22/3/2008

⁵ Simon Tisdall, "Ahmadinejad's rivals jockeying for position", *Guardian*, 22/6/2006

⁶ Ewen MacAskill and Simon Tisdall, "A year on, Ahmadinejad's popularity is soaring

⁷ Ian Black, "Rural support could win Ahmadinejad second term, despite his many critics", *Guardian*, 20/11/08

Islamist reformers on the one hand and bourgeois modernizers who benefited from the Rafsanjani/Khatami neoliberal reforms⁸ (i.e. the privatizations, the liberalization of foreign trade, etc.) on the other. This alliance, which played a leading role in the recent demonstrations, was, as the above analysis shows, an alliance against the majority of Iranians: i.e. those who are already paying for these reforms in terms of mass unemployment (or—as in the case of workers in the petro-chemical industries—would have to pay these reforms in the future if Mousavi was elected) and also of those who have benefited from Ahmadinejad’s presidency because of the increases in salaries and pensions introduced by his administration.

The fact that this unholy alliance is only a minority becomes obvious not only by the events mentioned above but also by a series of supporting facts, like the ones mentioned below, which indicate the reformist claim that their election victory was “stolen” by the fundamentalists is just a myth, which has been reproduced worldwide not only by the huge propaganda machine of the transnational elite but also by the fellow travellers of the reformist Left. This is how Seumas Milne⁹, one of the most serious *Guardian* analysts described the propaganda reproduced by Western media :

the Western media cameras focus so lovingly on Tehran’s gilded youth for whom Ahmadinejad is nothing but a Holocaust-denying fanatic. The other Ahmadinejad, who is seen to stand up for the country’s independence, expose elite corruption on TV and use Iran’s oil wealth to boost the incomes of the poor majority, is largely invisible abroad. While Mousavi promised market reforms and privatisation, more personal freedom and better relations with the West, the president increased pensions and public sector wages and handed out cheap loans. It’s hardly surprising that Ahmadinejad should have a solid base among the working class, the religious, small town and rural poor – or that he might have achieved a similar majority to that of his first election in 2005.

The supporting facts which cast a serious doubt –to say the least–on the myth of the stolen election include the following ones:

- a) the lack of any serious hard and concrete evidence pointing to a huge electoral fraud, which is required to account for the 11 million-vote gap between Ahmadinejad and Mousavi—this, of course, does not exclude the possibility of significant irregularities that could have taken place, (surely not for the first time in Iran!), that were not however of sufficient size to change the result;
- b) the disputing of the present result is just based on speculation about the high turnout, some surprising regional results, the speed of the official announcement, (clearly triggered however by Mousavi’s declaration that he was the winner before the polls closed!). Yet, as Milne points out, most official figures don’t look so implausible – Mousavi won Tehran, for instance, by 2.2m votes to 1.8m
- c) the fact that Ahmadinejad’s victory was predicted by one of the few genuinely independent polls carried out during the campaign by Ken Ballen and Patrick

⁸ Ramine Motamed-Nejad, “Iran: money and the mullahs”, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, (English edition) June 2009

⁹ Seumas Milne, “These are the birth pangs of Obama’s new regional order”

Doherty, who reported in the *Washington Post*.¹⁰ As the authors concluded: "Many experts are claiming that the margin of victory of incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was the result of fraud or manipulation, but our nationwide public opinion survey of Iranians three weeks before the vote showed Ahmadinejad leading by a more than 2 to 1 margin - greater than his actual apparent margin of victory in Friday's election."

- d) the analysis of regional voting patterns by James Petras¹¹ shows, as one could expect, significant class differentiations, with middle-class voters voting heavily for the reformist candidates and vice versa for rural and working class voters who voted for Ahmadinejad on account of his redistributive policies. The same conclusion was drawn by the above mentioned poll, which also showed how class issues, within age groups, were more influential in shaping political preferences than 'generational life style'. According to the same poll, over two-thirds of Iranian youth were too poor to have access to a computer and the 18-24 year olds "comprised the strongest voting bloc for Ahmadinejad of all groups."¹² The only group, which consistently favoured Mousavi, was the university students and graduates, business owners and the upper middle class. The 'youth vote', which the Western media praised as 'pro-reformist', was a clear minority of less than 30% but came from a highly privileged, vocal and largely English speaking group with a monopoly on the Western media.
- e) the only supposedly serious evidence supporting the fraud hypothesis is a study by Chatham House and an academic study. How unbiased were these studies becomes obvious if we examine further the authors of them. Chatham House is a London-based think tank financed by donations from large corporations, governments of the transnational elite and other organisations, expressing systemic views, and which, on at least one occasion, have been found to be a straight manipulation of data to justify preconceived positions!¹³ As far as the academic study is concerned, it was carried out by a recently created "Institute on Iranian studies" at St. Andrews university in Scotland and opened in 2006 by Khatami, (one of the arch-reformers we saw above, who is "admired in the west for his attempts to liberalise Iran's theocracy during his eight-year presidency"¹⁴). The report is co-signed by an expatriate Iranian academic, who is well known to *Guardian* readers for his articles on Iran that are clearly biased against the regime and in favour of the reformers and bourgeois modernizers!¹⁵ The report itself is full of suppositional evidence

¹⁰ Ken Ballen and Patrick Doherty, "The election results in Iran may reflect the will of the Iranian people", *Washington Post* 15/6/2009

¹¹ James Petras, "Iranian Elections: The 'Stolen Elections' Hoax," [Information Clearing House](http://informationclearinghouse.info/article22868.htm)", 19/6/2009 <http://informationclearinghouse.info/article22868.htm>

¹² *Washington Post*, 15/6/2009

¹³ See e.g. S. Tesfamariam, "Scholarly or Sophistry? A take on Chatham house's "Ethiopia and Eritrea: Allergic to Persuasion", *American Chronicle*, 6/2/2007 <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/viewArticle.asp?articleID=20292>.

¹⁴ Robert Tait, "Khatami's UK visit to bring tirade from Iran", *Guardian*, 5/10/2006

¹⁵ See for a typical example, Ali Ansari, "Only the US hawks can save the Iranian president now",

about the increased turnout breakdown of the votes and hardly of any concrete evidence, let alone conclusive evidence, as the authors of the study themselves admit when they write that “the breakdown of the votes is not a smoking gun”.¹⁶ Yet, this “non-smoking gun” was widely used by the world media and Znet (see below) as a kind of proof of the rigging of the elections!

Guardian, 30/1/2007

¹⁶Ali Ansari & Thomas Rintoul, “Magic numbers”, *Guardian*, 22/6/2009

Chapter 4. The aims of the transnational elite

It is therefore clear that the ‘unholy alliance’ I mentioned in the last chapter, essentially, is attempting a coup against the popular will, with the full support of the transnational elite and also of the reformist and “libertarian” Left which, yet again, objectively, plays the role of its cheerleader, i.e. of the fellow-traveller. This is not only because it supports the most reactionary forces within Iran itself, i.e. the reformist clerics and the bourgeois modernizers, but also because it legitimizes the regime change and the possible military blow in preparation by the Zionists and the transnational elite (in case the present coup fails) to fully enforce the New Order in the area, with incalculable implications to the world national liberation and social movements.

There is no doubt that regime change has always been the aim of the US elite (which is hegemonic within the transnational elite) and lately became the aim of the entire transnational elite. No wonder that as Scott Ritter, former UN Weapons inspector, revealed, Iran was named sixteen times as the number one threat to the national security of the United States of America in the 2006 version of the National Security Strategy.¹ As regards the effect of the recent change in the personnel of the political US elite following the US Presidential elections, Seumas Milne² aptly put it again:

Last Friday, even before the polls had closed in Iran, the US president commented that people were “looking at new possibilities” in Iran, just as they had in Lebanon’s elections the previous weekend. In fact, the unexpected defeat of Hezbollah’s opposition coalition (which nevertheless won the largest number of votes) seems to have had more to do with local Lebanese sectarian issues and large-scale vote buying than the Obama effect. But the implications of his remarks were not lost in Iran, where the US is still spending hundreds of millions of dollars in covert destabilisation programmes... In case anyone imagined such wars of Western occupation would become a thing of the past in the wake of the discredited Bush administration, General Dannatt, head of the British army, recently set out to disabuse them. Echoing US defence secretary Robert Gates, he insisted: “Iraq and Afghanistan are not aberrations – they are signposts for the future”. In such a context, the neutralisation of Iran as an independent regional power would be a huge prize for the US – defanging recalcitrants from Baghdad to Beirut – and a route out of the strategic impasse created by the invasion of Iraq.

In other words, “regime change” has always been and still is the ultimate aim of the US elite, irrespective of the personnel which is manning it, and only the tactics may vary from time to time—although even tactics may not be much different in the “new Obama era”, as Robert Gates made abundantly clear! This is because of the crucial

¹ Scott Ritter on "Target Iran: The Truth About the White House's Plans for Regime Change", *DEMOCRACY NOW*, 16/10/2006
http://www.democracynow.org/2006/10/16/scott_ritter_on_target_iran_the#transcript

² Seumas Milne, “These are the birth pangs of Obama’s new regional order”

geostrategic status of Iran which, as Walid Charara³ rightly pointed out,

“it is an independent and middle-ranking regional power that has engaged in military cooperation with Russia and China. With a population of 70 million, it has enormous human and economic potential. All this makes it the last bastion still to be holding out against a permanent US takeover of the Middle East. Iran is the last surviving ally in the region of those states and organisations still opposed to Israel. Without its backing, Lebanon, Syria, Hezbollah and Palestinian armed groups, deprived of any alternative regional or international support, would be left helpless in the face of Israel's military superiority.”

Why regime change NOW?

So, the question arising here is not whether regime change is the transnational elite's aim but why the campaign with this aim has reached a critical stage just now. Here, we have to mention a number of factors which significantly differentiate 2009-10 from any previous period, assuming of course that the deadline that the Iranian nuclear program supposedly sets at the end of 2009, as well as the anger of the transnational elite because of the supposed stealing of the last election from the reformist side and the consequent violations of human rights in the demonstrations which followed, are just ideological pretexts to justify any future intervention.

Such factors are:

- The completion of the encirclement of Iran following the occupation of two of Iran's neighbours (Iraq and Afghanistan) by huge Western armed forces (and growing in case of Afghanistan), which completed the previous encirclement by exiting client regimes (Pakistan, Turkey, Armenia) and newly emerging ones which are variously dependent on the transnational elite (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan etc).
- The growing political isolation of Iran from countries on which it used to exert significant influence in the recent past, notably Lebanon and Syria. As regards Lebanon, first, following the UN Security Council Resolution 1559, passed under the auspices of the transnational elite which effectively controls the Council, the Syrian army was forced to withdraw from Lebanon and then, following the Israeli attack on Lebanon in 2006, a UN force was sent in the Lebanon-Israeli border, ostensibly to protect the border Shia villages but, effectively, to protect Israel from Hezbollah, given that, as Robert Fisk put it, “the peacekeepers are really a NATO army in disguise”!⁴ As regards Syria, the “Obama factor” is used to a good effect by part of the Syrian elite under President Assad, which has always asked for an excuse to re-open diplomatic relations with USA (something that was formally announced in June 2009). Furthermore, it is well known that the transnational elite is in favour of an exchange of the Golan heights held by Zionist Israel in exchange for a formal peace treaty with Syria and an abandonment of its tactical alliance with Iran, part of which is the Iran-Syrian support for Hezbollah.⁵ There are already

³ Walid Charara “Iran: target zone”, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2005

⁴ Robert Fisk, “Conflict in the Middle East is Mission Implausible”, *Independent*, 15/11/2006

⁵ Donald Macintyre reports from Damascus, “Is Syria getting ready to come in from the cold?”,

signs that this process has already begun and it is not surprising that George Mitchell (Obama's special envoy to the Mid East) very recently said that he had told Syrian President Bashar Assad that Barack Obama was "determined to facilitate a truly comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace".⁶

- The shift in the balance of power not only externally but also inside Iran, as a result of the growing consumer society. As Saeed Leylaz, a Tehran-based economic analyst put it:⁷ "The tolerance of people to resist potential sanctions has decreased. Iran consumes much more now than eight years ago, from private cars to luxury goods. The direction of the Iranian economy is in direct contradiction to our diplomacy. A country that says 'Down with the USA' shouldn't open its doors to all the world's consumer durables. In a sanctions situation, we would face very high inflation, which would be in direct contradiction to Mr Ahmadinejad's promises to the people last summer. I don't believe the people are ready to sacrifice themselves."
- The growing covert actions against Iran. As the *New Yorker* revealed a year ago, the Bush administration had been expanding covert activities in Iran, under a secret directive, in the hope of toppling the Islamic regime.⁸ The magazine revealed that congressional leaders agreed to a request from Bush late last year for \$400m for measures described in a "presidential finding"—a highly classified document which must be issued when a covert intelligence operation gets under way. The finding focused on undermining Iran's nuclear programme and "trying to undermine the government through regime change," by working with opposition groups inside Iran and by "passing money". As the same report pointed out, "clandestine activities by the US against Iran are not new, but the scale and the scope of the operations, involving the CIA and the Joint Special Operations Command, have now been expanded, according to current and former officials quoted by Hersh". President Obama initially pretended that he would refrain from being seen to meddle in Iran's internal affairs but, as Eric Margolis pointed out⁹, "recently, Congress voted \$120 million for anti-regime media broadcasts into Iran and \$60-75 million in funding for opposition, violent underground Marxists and restive ethnic groups such as Azeris, Kurds and Arabs under the "Iran Democracy Program." Pakistani intelligence sources put the CIA's recent spending on "black operations" to subvert Iran's government at \$400 million". And Margolis concludes "while the majority of protests we see in Tehran are genuine and spontaneous, Western intelligence agencies are playing a key role in sustaining them and providing communications, including the newest method, via Twitter".

Guardian, 4/4/2009

⁶ BBC News, "US urges Syria on Mid-East peace", 26/7/09

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8169111.stm

⁷ Robert Tait, "A consumer society not ready for sanctions", *Guardian*, 6/2/2006

⁸ Anne Penketh, "Bush steps up covert action against Iran", *Independent*, 30/6/2008

⁹ Eric Margolis, "Iranian leadership feud too close to call", *Toronto Sun*, 21/6/2009

http://www.torontosun.com/comment/columnists/eric_margolis/2009/06/21/9877111-sun.html

With regards to the last factor in particular, a recent report by Simon Tisdall in the *Guardian* is indicative:¹⁰

Although the problem can be overstated, Iranian leaders of all political complexions have reason to worry about the so-called minorities question in a country comprising multiple ethno linguistic groups, namely Persians, Azeris, Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis, Turkmen, Armenians, Assyrians, Jews and Georgians. Recent reports from Iranian Kurdistan, for example, speak of 100 or more checkpoints being erected by Revolutionary Guards and the shelling of PJAK positions inside northern Iraq. Iranian officials have linked the recent suicide bombing of a Shia mosque in Zahedan, in Sistan-Baluchistan, to US, British and Israeli support for the Jundullah Sunni Muslim separatist group. A failed attempt last month to blow up a domestic airliner in Ahvaz, in Arab Khuzestan, brought similar claims.

However, it is not only ethnic differences that are exploited by the transnational elite and Zionists (as *Le Monde Diplomatique* reported a couple of years ago, “Seymour Hersh's report that Mossad is giving equipment and training to the Iranian Kurdish group Pejak is credible”¹¹) in the effort for regime change. As the same report by Selig S Harrison in *Le Monde Diplomatique* revealed, millions of US dollars covertly go to NGO human rights activists in Iran—a fact confirmed by the then Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns who has revealed at the time that “we are working with Arab and European organisations to support democratic groups within Iran”, since getting direct US funding into Iran “is a very difficult thing for us to do” given “the harsh Iranian government response against the Iranian individuals”.¹²

A “Yugoslavian” kind of strategy for Iran?

As regards the method of achieving regime change, there is no doubt that the transnational elite would prefer it ‘from within’, in the context of the phased approach I described above. But, as Jonathan Freedland¹³, revealed recently, this ‘soft’ approach it’s not one Washington will deploy indefinitely and in fact may be just part of a project involving a preplanned military blow:

“We’ll see if it bears fruit,” says a US official. “If it doesn’t then, at some point, we’ll have to try something else. It’s not without limit.” When might US patience run out? The answer is the end of this year: after that, Western diplomats believe Tehran will reach the nuclear point of no return, when no one will be able to prevent it acquiring the bomb. In this context, Tehran might feel the need to offset the charge of election fraud with a reputation-redeeming gesture, softening the nuclear line. Should that not come, and Obama decides to replace diplomacy with something stronger, his chances of marshalling an international

¹⁰ Simon Tisdall, “Tehran’s fear of foreign plotters may be justified”, *Guardian*, 17/6/2009

¹¹ Selig S Harrison, “The US meddles aggressively in Iran”, *Le Monde diplomatique* October 2007

¹² “The Hard Realities of Soft Power”, *New York Time Magazine*, 24 June 2007

¹³ Jonathan Freedland, “Seismic events in Iran and Israel have set a critical test of Obama’s resolve”, *Guardian*, 16/6/2009

coalition will have been boosted: Washington expects to hear fewer arguments defending Iran's nuclear quest as the legitimate interest of a legitimate government... The policy will continue for another six months, if only so that, should Iran eventually show Washington the finger, Obama can say what Bush never could: that he tried to do it the nice way... If the Iranian election crisis is not somehow defused, Netanyahu will clearly find it easier to argue his case that "the biggest threat to Israel, the Middle East and the entire world is the crossing of a nuclear weapon with radical Islam" and that there should be "an international coalition against the nuclear arming of Iran", as he said in his policy speech on Sunday.

The combination of all these factors makes an attempt by the transnational elite and the Zionists for the "Yugoslavian" kind of strategy I mentioned above all the more likely. In fact, as Seymour Hersh stated in the *New Yorker* report mentioned above, "there are even those in the US government (Bush administration) who are convinced that a sustained bombing campaign would not only halt Iran's nuclear programme; it would, apparently, so weaken the clerical regime that Iranians would be compelled to rise up and overthrow it". Militarily, the US elite will have no problem to pursue such a strategy. As Dan Plesch¹⁴ pointed out a few years ago:

America's devastating air power is not committed in Iraq. Just 120 B52, B1 and B2 bombers could hit 5,000 targets in a single mission. Thousands of other warplanes and missiles are available. The army and marines are heavily committed in Iraq, but enough forces could be found to secure coastal oilfields and to conduct raids into Iran. A US attack is unlikely to be confined to the suspected WMD locations or to involve a ground invasion to occupy the country. The strikes would probably be intended to destroy military, political and (oil excepted) economic infrastructure. A disabled Iran could be further paralysed by civil war. Tehran alleges US support for separatists in the large Azeri population of the north-west, and fighting is increasing in Iranian Kurdistan.

Furthermore, the possible negative consequences of an attack on Iran are not such a deterrent anymore, as the case was a few years ago, for the following reasons:

- a Shia rising in Iraq is not as likely as before, after the essential neutralisation of Mahdi army following the truce declared in August 2007 by its leader Moqtada al-Sadr. Needless to add that the client regime in Iraq, which owes its very existence to the transnational elite, would obviously not even think to put obstacles to a US attack on Iran;
- the effective weakening of Hezbollah and Hamas resistance (despite the heroic rhetoric of them) after the devastating blows they received from the mortal Zionist force in the last war on Lebanon and the massacre in Gaza, as well as the UN force Hezbollah was forced to accept in the border with Israel (a similar solution may be imposed on Hamas in the future). An indication of this is that no significant numbers of missiles from either Lebanon or Gaza have crossed the borders towards Israel since the end of the wars in Lebanon and Gaza;

¹⁴ Dan Plesch, "The US has the capability and reasons for an assault – and it is hard to See Britain uninvolved", *Guardian*, 15/8/2005

- the fear of a recession caused by rising oil prices in case of Iranian attacks against oil facilities in the Gulf is also not that much serious in the mid of the greatest capitalist crisis since the recession. And, even more important,
- the unholy alliance mentioned above which brands the Ahmadinejad/ Khameini regime as “illegitimate” –after the supposed “stolen elections”–will find that much easier to usurp power from the Islamist fundamentalists, following devastating air attacks by the formidable killing machine of the US elite.

In this context, it is not surprising that US Vice-President Joe Biden has recently hinted that the administration will not restrain Israel if it decides on military action to remove any Iranian nuclear threat. Thus, when asked whether the US would stand in the way if the Israelis decided to launch a military attack against Iranian nuclear facilities, Biden said Israel, like the US, had a right to "determine what is in its interests"¹⁵. At the same time, the Mossad head in Israel assured the Israeli PM that Saudi Arabia would look the other way in case Israeli jets were to use the Saudi air space to attack the Iranian nuclear infra-structure!¹⁶

¹⁵ BBC News, “Biden strikes tough note on Iran”, 6/7/2009
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8135414.stm

¹⁶ Associated Press/*Times* on line: Kanellos, “Green light from US to Israel on an attack against Iran”, *Eleftherotypia*, 6/7/2009

Chapter 5. The reformist left plays its usual role of the system's cheerleader

The role of the "Left" in the New World Order

The common stand supported by 'genetically modified' Marxists like Slavoj Žižek and so called "anarchists" like Noam Chomsky, as well as by analysts hosted by the Znet empire, is the following one: a popular uprising erupted in Iran against an obscurantist and oppressive Islamic regime, which, in the recent presidential elections, has "stolen" the victory supposedly achieved by the "progressive" reformers.

Of course, this kind of stand is not new, as the reformist "Left" adopted a similar stand with respect to all the wars of the transnational elite in the New World Order era, which began with the flourishing of neoliberal globalisation and the collapse of 'actually existing socialism' in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Thus, first, the NATO bombing of Serbia was justified by this Left, the Greens and others, supposedly in order to protect the human rights of Kosovars, which were violated by the "tyrannical" Milosevic regime. At the end of this process, the only independent from the transnational elite regime in the Balkans was dismantled.¹

Then, it was the turn of the regime in Iraq, which had become the target of the transnational elite twice: first, in 1991 with the aim to "liberate" Kuwait (with the open support of the reformist Left and the tolerance of the Greens) and, second, in 2003, with the aim to save us from its weapons of mass destruction.² At the end of this process (surprise, surprise!) one of the two main independent regimes from the transnational elite in the area, the Baathist regime which had nationalised Iraqi oil, was destroyed.

Finally, the transnational elite organised and financed the "pink" revolutions in the ex-Soviet Union (Georgia, Ukraine³), and these campaigns were supported again by the reformist Left, the Human Rights NGOs and similar organisations. Another

¹ See references in footnote 11 (ch 1)

² See Takis Fotopoulos, "The Significance of the Assassination of Saddam by the New World Order", *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol.3, No.1, (January 2007)
http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol3/vol3_no1_Saddam.htm

See also "Iraq: the new criminal "war" of the transnational elite" *DEMOCRACY & NATURE: The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY* Vol.9, No.2, (July 2003)
http://www.democracynature.org/vol9/takis_war2.htm and "The Global 'war' of the Transnational Elite", *Democracy & Nature*, vol 8 No. 2 (July 2002)
http://www.democracynature.org/vol8/takis_globalwar.htm

³ See Takis Fotopoulos, "The Ukrainian Crisis and the Transnational Elite", *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol.1, No.4 (July 2005)
http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/newsletter/vol1_no4_Ukraine.htm

“surprise” emerged at the end of this process when new client regimes were established in these countries, one of which has even caused a war with Russia!⁴

Similarly, today, the reformist Left’s contribution to the demonisation of the Islamic regime by the transnational elite, in preparation of a coup from within or of a military blow from without, has been decisive in disorienting activists in the Left from the real enemy, which is not of course Ahmadinejad and the Islamic regime but the transnational elite itself! Clearly, the fall of the present Islamic regime and its replacement by a client regime (which is the only real possibility at the present balance of power) will only bring about the ‘pacification’ of the Mid East and beyond—a fact which shows beyond any doubt that the role which the same reformist Left plays today, (irrespective of the anti-capitalist rhetoric it might use), deliberately or at least objectively, is that of a fellow-traveller of the transnational elite.

Having said this, the Islamic regime, as any theocratic or religious regime, has nothing to do with democracy and autonomy. In fact, theocracy and religion in general are prime examples of heteronomy and are utterly incompatible with a genuine democracy like an Inclusive Democracy.⁵ Neither is there any doubt that the Islamic regime, once it stabilised its power after the 1979 Revolution, it turned against its former allies against the Shah (communists, libertarians and so on) and imposed various restrictions on social movements not controlled by it, in order to secure its monopoly of power. This does not mean of course that serious restrictions are not imposed by the “democratic” regimes in the West today as well, under the pretext of the fight against “terrorism”. Furthermore, the Islamic regime, being a theocratic regime, had no qualms to support, directly or indirectly, the transnational elite in its campaigns to secure the submission of the “rogue” regimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, simply because its criteria were not purely political (the fight against the New World Order) but also cultural, i.e. the need to support the Shias against the Sunnis and similar considerations. In other words, the Islamic elite, being a theocratic regime, bases its decisions both on religious and political grounds. This is because, for this kind of regime, the main axis of its conflict with the transnational elite and neoliberal globalisation is not economic and political globalisation but cultural globalisation.

However, all this should not cast any doubt on the general anti-New World Order stand of the Islamic regime, as the reformist Left attempts to do. In fact, the Iranian incentives, both with respect to Iraq and Afghanistan were not purely cultural either. In Iraq, the US invasion decisively helped bringing to power the Iraqi Shias, who are the majority in the population and, crucially, are supported by the Iranian Islamic regime. Clearly, on this, there was a convergence of interests among the US and Iranian elites, although for different reasons. Thus, the American elite was simply using the old “divide and rule” tactic, through which they succeeded to have a client regime in Iraq, and which will have to depend for a long time on US military and

⁴ See Takis Fotopoulos, “Transnational elite and Russia: a new bipolar world?”
The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY, Vol.4, No..4, (October 2008)
http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol4/vol4_no4_takis_russia.htm

⁵ See Takis Fotopoulos, “The Rise of New Irrationalism and its Incompatibility with Inclusive Democracy”, *DEMOCRACY & NATURE: The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol. 4, Nos. 2/3 (issue 11/12) double issue, (1998).

economic support. On the other hand, the Islamic elite in Iran gained a Shia regime next door, which—they assume—will not allow an attack from its soil of the transnational elite against them and, in the long term, they could even unite with them in controlling the area. This is of course an assumed convergence of interests based on the fundamentally flawed assumption that the American elite will withdraw its military capability from Iraq (which does not include just land forces but, even more important, air and naval ones), even before they have sorted out first the “Iranian regime“ problem, either from within or from without.

As far as Afghanistan is concerned, there is also a similar assumed convergence of US and Iranian interests, given that both the transnational elite and the Islamic regime are against the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden, although, again, for different reasons. The former, because they want to smash any resistance against the New World Order and the latter, because they distrust the anti-Shias Taliban, as well as Al Qaida. Yet again, the Islamic regime makes another flawed assumption that the client regime in Afghanistan, with which it has cultivated good relations, will not turn against it, forgetting in the process the complete political, military and economic dependence of the present elite in Afghanistan on the transnational elite!

But, as I mentioned in the Introduction, gaining the political independence (and if possible the economic independence as well) from the transnational elite and the system is a necessary condition for democracy and autonomy. The ideas therefore promoted by the reformist Left and post-modern anarchists about a simultaneous fight against the transnational elite and the theocratic regime (or any Islamic movement fighting for independence like Hamas, Hezbollah etc) end up with a reactionary “equal distances” approach. Such an approach not only objectively enhances the transnational elite but it is also definitely promoted by it, with the aim to neutralise the Left and disorient activists all over the world, by distracting their attention from the fact that the real and primary enemy is the transnational elite and associated elites (Zionist elite and local elites of client regimes) and not what these elites call “rogue” regimes (Iran, Venezuela, Cuba etc) and movements. This is because a genuine antisystemic struggle should have as its first enemy the elites supporting the system itself and not the local hierarchical structures that have been imposed by the “rogue” regimes and movements. The confusion therefore created today by the reformist Left and post-modern “anarchists” on the need to fight first for human rights in each country aims to move the focus of the social struggle from an antisystemic struggle to a reformist struggle within the system –something perfectly consistent with today’s credo of the genetically modified “Left”, which it seems that only in its rhetoric fights the system itself !

However, these sorts of conclusions are not even understood by another part of libertarian Left, the so-called “autonomists”, who believe that all wars are class wars and that therefore there is no need to support national liberation movements. On the other hand, the alternative view supported by this book and the ID project is that such movements should be supported, not only because they play a crucial role in weakening the transnational elite in a globalised world like the present one, but also because national liberation is a precondition for a social liberation based on autonomy. It is obviously ridiculous to see common interests between the US soldiers in Iraq or Afghanistan and the occupied Iraqi and Afghani workers and peasants, or between Israeli soldiers and occupied Palestinian peasants, given that such commonality of interests arises only at a very high level of abstraction which has

nothing to do with real people with different cultures who have passed through fundamentally different processes of socialisation. Furthermore, this sort of silly approach has very negative practical implications, given that it ends up, again, with the adoption of an “equal distances” stand which neutralises activists and condemns them to inaction, to the utmost delight of the transnational elite! No wonder that “Left”, and so called “anarchist”, Zionists are enthusiastic supporters of this approach, arguing that any resistance against the Zionist occupiers is reactionary, since they are also workers oppressed by their elites and therefore workers on both sides should unite and turn against their common enemy, the capitalists on either side!

The above conclusions about the role of the reformist Left could be justified if we consider in more detail the main arguments produced by analysts, who directly or indirectly support the propaganda of the transnational elite and the world mass media it controls.

Zizek and Chomsky on Iran

Slavoj Zizek,⁶ the post-modern “Marxist” darling of the mass media controlled by the transnational elite, managed to give a completely distorted picture of the pink revolution in Iran which—on the basis of the analysis above—is close to a complete reversal of the truth. The following extract shows how he managed this achievement!:

We are dealing with a genuine popular uprising of the deceived partisans of the Khomeini revolution. There are a couple of crucial consequences to be drawn from this insight. First, Ahmadinejad is not the hero of the Islamist poor, but a genuine corrupted Islamo-Fascist populist a kind of Iranian Berlusconi ... behind him are not only organs of police repression and a very Westernized PR apparatus, but also a strong new rich class, the result of the regime’s corruption (Iran’s Revolutionary Guard is not a working class militia, but a mega-corporation, the strongest centre of wealth in the country)... Mousavi is something entirely different: his name stands for the genuine resuscitation of the popular dream which sustained the Khomeini revolution. Even if this dream was a utopia, one should recognize in it the genuine utopia of the revolution itself... Whatever the outcome, it is vitally important to keep in mind that we are witnessing a great emancipatory event which doesn’t fit the frame of the struggle between pro-Western liberals and anti-Western fundamentalists

So, in this post-modern “Marxist” caricature of reality, all we have in Iran is a conflict between, on the one hand, the Iranian version of Berlusconi (Ahmadinejad) backed by a strong new rich class and, on the other, a “utopian”, who stands for the genuine resurrection of the Khomeini’s revolution ideals, (Mousavi) backed by an emancipatory movement that sees in him the possible realisation of the 1979 dreams! On top of this, this Coca-Cola kind of a “radical” thinker, had no qualms to describe those in the antisystemic Left, who attempted to see the dirty international game played on Iran by the transnational elite and the Zionists to integrate the entire Mid East into the New World Order, as follows: “the saddest of them all are the Leftist

⁶ Slavoj Zizek, “Will the cat above the precipice fall down?”
<http://supportiran.blogspot.com/2009/06/slavoj-zizeks-new-text-on-iran.html>

supporters of Ahmadinejad” for whom what is really at stake is Iranian independence. However, Zizek in one sense is absolutely right. It is only when the entire world will have been integrated into the New Order that he and his likes in Znet etc would be able to play the role of a “radical” (i.e. genetically modified) Left fighting for a human face of this Order!

At the same time, Chomsky sided with the pink revolution with no hesitation at all, as it is obvious by the following extract in which, based on the flimsiest evidence possible and no analysis at all, he concludes that the electoral results lacked credibility and “an enormous popular protest followed, brutally suppressed by the armed forces of the ruling clerics”. Thus, for Chomsky⁷:

In Iran, the electoral results issued by the Interior Ministry lacked credibility both by the manner in which they were released and by the figures themselves. An enormous popular protest followed, brutally suppressed by the armed forces of the ruling clerics. Perhaps Ahmadinejad might have won a majority if votes had been fairly counted, but it appears that the rulers were unwilling to take that chance. From the streets, correspondent Reese Erlich, who has had considerable experience with popular uprisings and bitter repression in US domains, writes that “It's a genuine Iranian mass movement made up of students, workers, women, and middle class folks” - and possibly much of the rural population. Eric Hooglund, a respected scholar who has studied rural Iran intensively, dismisses standard speculations about rural support for Ahmadinejad, describing “overwhelming” support for Mousavi in regions he has studied, and outrage over what the large majority there regard as a stolen election.

Clearly, Chomsky’s considerate conclusions are therefore based on what he heard and read in the mass media of the transnational elite and such “unbiased” reports as those of Reese Erlich (see next section on Znet) and that of Eric Hooglund,⁸ whose conclusions of fraud are based on what he heard happened to the votes of a village he knew from his research and on the demos in a city near by!

The sort of “alternative” information provided by Znet

As regards the analysts hosted by the Znet empire, which (supposedly) provides “alternative” information and analysis, it is obvious that the stand it adopted on the Iran issue hardly differs from the one adopted by the media of the transnational elite!

Thus, Reese Erlich,⁹ a freelance foreign correspondent and author of *The Iran Agenda: the Real Story of U.S. Policy and the Middle East Crisis*, with the air of superiority of a personal witness of events, draws the usual conclusions, based however just on description rather than on analysis, which is hardly the way to

⁷ Noam Chomsky, “Season of Travesties: Freedom and Democracy in mid-2009”, *Znet*, July 10, 2009 <http://www.zcommunications.org/zspace/commentaries/3922>

⁸ Eric Hooglund, “Iran's Rural Vote and Election Fraud”, *Znet*, June 27, 2009 <http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21813>

⁹ See e.g. Reese Erlich, “Iran and Leftist Confusion” , *Znet*, 29/6/2009 <http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21820>

interpret this sort of events. Furthermore, he should know that being a witness to a social explosion gives very little clues, if any, about its causes and its real nature. Obviously, the same demonstrations in Tehran would be presented and interpreted very differently by a supporter of their cause (as he clearly is) and an opponent to them. The very first paragraph of his article clearly betrays how unbiased he is when he talks about “those risking their lives daily on the streets of major Iranian cities fighting for political, social and economic justice”. But, unlike the 1979 demos, not only there were no reports of any big demos on the streets of other major Iranian cities apart from Tehran, but also the demand for social and economic justice has nothing to do with the protests against inflation nor with the demands for human rights, the punishment of corruption and fair elections voiced by the Tehran demonstrators. We did not see for instance any slogans for economic equality—a basic demand for economic justice—something consistent with the analysis in this book that the participants in these demonstrations were mainly bourgeois students and ladies from the northern suburbs of Tehran, as well as supporters of the reformist clerics who wish to further liberalise the economy—a demand which is completely incompatible with economic equality—from various social groups!

Then, Erlich attempts to show the spontaneous character of these demos by stressing their multi-class character—something however which simply confirms our analysis of a double conflict in Iran. As the ‘unholy alliance’ described above includes not only bourgeois modernizers but also supporters of the reformist clerics (who obviously come from all social strata) the multi-class composition of the demos is not surprising at all. He then goes on to adopt the ‘stolen elections’ argument, not producing in the process a shred of concrete—let alone conclusive—evidence on it, but resorting in the end to the biased academic study mentioned above, which confesses that all the evidence it produced does not consist a “smoking gun”! There is no need to deal with his argument that there is no democracy in the Iranian institutions (something I discussed in the previous chapters) but the funny thing is that the impression one gets from his description of the role of the ruling elite in Iran is that there is no ruling elite in USA, where presumably there is democracy!

Erlich then goes on to discuss the silly question whether the CIA and Obama were involved in the organisation of these demos—accusing in the process Left supporters of this view that all their arguments are by analogy and implication, although, essentially he does exactly the same ! This is of course inevitable given that neither the supporters of the view about CIA intervention, nor its opponents could have any real hard evidence on this and therefore all that analysts could do, as I also tried to do in this book, is to show the reasons why Obama and the transnational elite have every reason to support these demos in their aim for regime change. Finally, there is no need to deal with assertions of the form “Ahmadinejad has introduced 24% annual inflation and high unemployment”, which are launched within the context of his vitriolics against the regime in general and Ahmadinejad in particular and which, at best, betray complete ignorance of the economic factors and processes leading to such phenomena, as I showed in chapters 2 and 3.

The question therefore arising from this sort of “analysis” is whether this is an exception or whether instead this is the sort of “alternative” information hosted by Znet on the matter. An examination of the views on Iran presented by Znet, in the form of articles, overwhelmingly supports the latter hypothesis, whereas an examination of the comments on these articles in the Znet forum shows a widespread

feeling of disgust of Znet visitors with this sort of stand and the kind of information provided!

Thus, Saeed Rahnema,¹⁰ a formal Zwriter and an Iranian expatriate academic and member of several establishment research projects, including the Ford Foundation on Muslim Diasporas in the West, is an even clearer case of the utter reformist views– which indirectly support the transnational elite’s line on Iran– hosted by Znet. This becomes clear almost from the very opening statement of his article:

disturbingly, like in the situations in Gaza or Lebanon, where Hamas and Hezbollah uncritically became champions of anti-imperialism, for some other people on the left, Ahmadinejad has become a champion because of his seemingly firm rhetoric against Israel and the US. Based on a crude class analysis, he is also directly or indirectly praised by some for his supposed campaign against the rich and imagined support of the working poor. These analyses also undermine the genuine movement within the vibrant Iranian civil society, and denigrate their demands for democracy, and political and individual freedoms as middle class concerns, instigated by Western propaganda

Presumably, this “Left” academic hosted by Znet never heard of national liberation movements and reproduces the transnational elite and Zionist propaganda that Hamas and Hezbollah are “terrorist” organisations and-even more important-never heard of an antisystemic Left and yet he is prominently hosted by the supposed anti-capitalist Michael Albert in his Znet empire! All that Rahnema understands as the Left is the present genetically modified “Left” that has abandoned any questioning of the system of the capitalist market economy and representative “democracy”, which he takes for granted and bothers only about the demands of the “civil society”. In other words, for him, the “Left” is that part of the political spectrum which adopts the various middle class, (usually single-issue) movements, which form the Non Government Organisations that are directly or indirectly financed and promoted by the transnational elite, and fights for what passes as “democracy” today in the West, and the protection of human rights. Any coincidence of this with the ideology of the transnational elite that it used to justify all its recent wars, including the “war on terror” (which the “progressive” Obama renamed but still fights it in Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere) is NOT accidental!

Thus, the author violently attacks the old antisystemic Left (*Monthly Review*, James Petras et al.) for their correct stand on the Iranian ‘pink’ revolution, exploiting the weak points of their analyses which I also mentioned in chapters 2 and 3, i.e. the inconsistencies of the Iranian regime’s stand with respect to neoliberal globalisation, the theocratic irrationalities and so on. Yet, this does not prevent Rahnema to have the nerve to accuse the old antisystemic Left for “not understanding that all factions of the Islamic regime have always been staunch capitalists”, as if the bourgeois modernisers whom he clearly supports, are proletarians and not fully committed to the capitalist system! And it is ridiculous indeed that Rahnema blames exclusively Ahmadinejad and the fundamentalists for “failed economic policies, the rising 30% inflation rate, growing unemployment”, whereas, as we saw in chapters 2 and 3,

¹⁰ Saeed Rahnema, “The Tragedy of the Left’s Discourse on Iran”, *ZNET*, 10/7/2009
<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21948>

unemployment and inflation are much more the effects of the neoliberal reforms introduced by the reformists (whom he supports as part of the ‘unholy alliance’) rather than of the state controls introduced by the fundamentalists to support the victims of these reforms.

But, our “Left” academic has the nerve to go even further, as the following statement makes it clear:¹¹

The left has historically been rooted in solidarity with progressive movements, women's rights and rights for unions and its voice has been first and foremost a call for freedom. The voices that we hear today from part of the Left are tragically reactionary. Siding with religious fundamentalists with the wrong assumptions that they are anti-imperialists and anti-capitalists, is aligning with the most reactionary forces of history. This is a reactionary left, different from the progressive left which has always been on the side of the forces of progress

And he concludes informing us about what is actually going on in Iran and what the role of the Left should be¹²:

What is happening in Iran is a spontaneous, ingenious and independent revolt by a people frustrated with thirty years of obscurantist tyrannical religious rule, triggered by electoral fraud but rooted in more substantial demands. Much to the dismay of the clerical regime and their supporters inside and outside the country, the ever expanding Iranian civil society brilliantly seized the moment of the election to take strong steps forward. They have no illusions about the Islamist regime, or about their own capabilities. Their strategy is to gradually and non-violently replace the Islamic regime and its hegemony with a secular democratic one. This is a hugely significant, delicate and protracted confrontation. It is essential that they get the wide-ranging effective support from the left in the West so that they don't fall prey to the misleading conception of the left not having concerns for democracy and civil liberties.

So, the author, taking for granted that the Left consists of the reformist part of it which, indeed, fights only for human rights and liberties, i.e. for the liberal meaning of freedom (‘freedom from’), instead of the socialist and libertarian meaning of it (‘freedom to’) that implies the fight for the change of the system itself– i.e. “forgetting” the original task of the Left itself– accuses the antisystemic Left as “reactionary”! Why? Because it dared to reveal the aims of the transnational elite and of the system itself with respect to the present dual conflict in Iran for regime change. He has good company on this with the entire transnational elite and the mass media controlled by it, who are in the midst of a massive disinformation campaign to demonise the Iranian regime (very similar to the ones they followed before the attacks against the peoples of Serbia, Iraq etc), with the aims I showed in the last chapter. In other words, the proper role of the Left for him is to fight against the regimes that the system classifies as “rogue” rather than against the system itself– even if the latter involves allying with regimes which are not to our liking but which fight for their political and economic independence from the transnational elite. It is only fools (or people pretending to be fools for their own reasons) who do not understand that the precondition for genuine democracy and autonomy, i.e. for

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

systemic change in any country belonging to a globalised world, is the breaking of the dependence ties of the country concerned from those controlling this globalised system rather than the overthrowing of an indigenous elite which—for its own reasons—follows such a policy! Rahnama and his ilk in the reformist Left are indeed perfect examples of today's degradation of the Left, which plays the role of the cheerleader of the system and its campaigns to impose client regimes all over the world and stifle any resistance against the New World Order.

Exactly the same line is promoted by another star of the Znet stable: Farooq Sulehria who, in an article entitled "Ahmedinejad and the anti-imperialism of fools",¹³ exploits the same inconsistencies of the Iranian regime with a proper anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism which I mentioned above. As he put it, "not merely is Ahmedinejad's anti-Americanism, anti-Israel policy highly questionable but declaring him an anti-imperialist blatantly trivializes anti-imperialism". Here the trick is to criticise—supposedly from an antisystemic viewpoint—the Iranian regime, justifying in the process the demand of the 'pink revolution' that it has to be overthrown. Of course, he never attempts to draw the logical implication that if the present unholy alliance does succeed in overthrowing this regime, the alternative will not be a proper anticapitalist and anti-imperialist one, but just another client regime of the transnational elite! No wonder that he gives a definition of anti-imperialism which has nothing to do with the classical meaning of it but is, in fact, a post-modern salad based on what the reformist Left is all about today.

Thus, for Sulehria :

"Anti-imperialism includes national liberation, women's emancipation, democratization, political and economic empowerment, respect for religious minorities, and self-determination for oppressed nationalities. Anti-imperialism is freedom for all oppressed, from all oppression".

However, the classical meaning of the term involved only the national liberation movements against colonialism (i.e. against the colonial powers) and neo-colonialism (i.e. against political and economic dependence on the West), as a **precondition** for social liberation. This implied the continuation of the struggle **within** a liberated country against the local political and economic elites, once the national liberation has been achieved. Therefore, the struggle for women's emancipation, self-determination for oppressed nationalities and generally for self-management at all levels, what we call an Inclusive Democracy (ID), should follow national liberation not precede it! Otherwise, by implication, we should, for instance, support the struggle of the bourgeois expatriates in Florida and a possible pink revolution against the Castro regime in Cuba in the future, because this regime also violates the bourgeois defined human rights—which, by the way, are being reversed today even in countries with a long tradition on them like Britain.

Yet, Sulehria also distorts the historical process of the post-Second World War period in the Muslim world in order to establish his case of an alliance of imperialism with fundamentalism. He uses for this purpose a plot theory of history, for lack of any real

¹³ Farooq Sulehria, "Ahmedinejad and the anti-imperialism of fools", ZNET , 10/7/2009
<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21945>

analytical framework. Thus, for him, the present pseudo anti-imperialism of the Islamic regime is just “the product of the process run by imperialism in collaboration with fundamentalism, to eliminate genuine anti-imperialism in the Muslim world”! In his words:

The anti-imperialism currently on display in the Muslim world is symbolic and not of substance. It signifies a new phase in the relationship between two estranged lovers, fundamentalism and imperialism. It is the product of the process run by imperialism in collaboration with fundamentalism, to eliminate genuine anti-imperialism in the Muslim world... there is a clear connivance between fundamentalism and imperialism. With radical nationalist leaders dead and communist or socialist parties eliminated, the political arena was wide open for Imam Khomeini, Osama bin Laden, Mullah Muhammad Omar or their local clones...An anti-imperialism that does not threaten to nationalize oil (Osama declares that oil is an asset owned by Arabs but opposes its common ownership), stand for land distribution or allow the working classes to organize trade unions – such "anti-imperialism" does not bother the Empire. It is an anti-imperialism based on the repression of women, religious minorities, small nationalities, trade unions, peasant organizations, and political parties. Thus, it actually functions to carry imperialism's needs: repression of the masses. It is countries that oppress their masses and lack trade unions and workers' parties that best suit multinationals. The so-called anti-imperialism of these religious forces thus actually serves imperialism in the current global scenario. It is, at best, the anti-imperialism of fools.

To draw this conclusion Sulehria had to completely distort History and manipulate the events to fit his Procrustean bed of a connivance between fundamentalists and imperialists. It is true that the Western elites in the Cold War period and their successor (i.e. the transnational elite) in the New World Order had to eliminate a number of “rogue” regimes, including their leaderships as well, although what they were most afraid of was not the personalities of the leaders, as he states, but the massive popular movements supporting them. It is also true that to achieve this result their natural allies were the fundamentalists, who were rising everywhere in the Arab world (and not only!) following the collapse of ‘actually existing socialism’ and the consequent decline of the movements for Arab socialism and nationalism.¹⁴ However, this was an obvious “divide and rule” exercise of the Western elites, while the fundamentalists themselves were fully aware of the fact they were used by them as instruments of their policies. In fact, they took part in these alliances with the elites with the sole aim to take over from the secular regimes, in order to implement their Islamic fundamentalism, which, however, by its nature, was incompatible with the cultural globalisation of the New World Order. No wonder that as soon as these fundamentalist regimes took over in Iran, Afghanistan, Gaza etc they became “enemy number one” for Western “Imperialists”, as they were fully aware of the fact that the popular movements supporting them were not just religious irrationalists but mainly people who were fighting for their national liberation in an era of collapse of the traditional secular political movements.

Furthermore, if anti-imperialism today means the fight against the “repression of

¹⁴ See Takis Fotopoulos, “The Rise of New Irrationalism”

women, religious minorities, small nationalities, trade unions, peasant organizations, and political parties”, as Sulehria put it, then, he is in good company! The entire transnational elite and its formidable power is behind him. Therefore, the “Left” he supports could go back to its sofas and wait for the dismantlement of the last rogue regime in the area, so that they could get the Western kind of “democracy” they so admire, until his pseudo ‘anti-imperialism’ would have won.

Then, it was the turn of Stephen Shalom, close associate of Michael Albert and author of *ParPolity: Political Vision for a Good Society*¹⁵, (the political dimension of Parecon¹⁶ which was never written by Albert) who, in a simplistic Q&A format which reminds one of the framed poll questions asked by pollsters to get the replies they want,¹⁷ supposedly tried to clarify the issues involved but, in fact aimed—through his manipulation and distortion of the facts and omissions—to obscure them and disorient Left activists. Thus, first, he takes for granted the ‘stolen’ elections hypothesis invoking as “proof” the “non-smoking gun” I mentioned in chapter 3 and a report by Chatham House, a British think tank of an impeccable bias, as we saw in the same chapter!

He then asks the question “Hasn't the U.S. (and Israel) been interfering in Iran and promoting regime change, including by means of supporting all sorts of "pro-democracy" groups? Pretending to be unbiased, he concedes meddling by US and others but he then immediately denies its significance by asserting that “foreign meddling does not prove foreign control” and that, “In any event, there is no evidence that the CIA or any other arm of U.S. intelligence – or Mossad – had anything to do with initiating or leading the protests in Iran”, adding for good measure that “it is absurd to see a parallel between the rightwing elements in Venezuela and Bolivia”! So, the huge right wing demos in Chile before the coup, or in Venezuela before the attempted coup, let alone the “pro-democracy” demos in Georgia and Ukraine which established client regimes in these countries had nothing to do with “foreign meddling”! For him, as supporters of the Left, as long as we see a demo demanding human rights and “democracy” we have automatically to greet it, without any analysis of who are the demonstrators and why and against whom they protest and what sort of forces and why support them. And Professor Shalom calls this sort of propaganda as analysis!

But the culmination of hypocrisy, which at the same time shows the strange role of “equal distances” played today by a supposed “Left”, like the one represented by Chomsky, Shalom, Albert, Shalom and company, is the answer he gives to the question “Is Ahmadinejad good for world anti-imperialism?”:

¹⁵ See for a critique of Parpolity, Takis Fotopoulos, “Recent Theoretical Developments on the ID project” in [Global capitalism and the demise of the left: renewing radicalism through inclusive democracy](#) *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY* Vol. 5, No. 1, Special Issue (Winter 2009), pp. 298-300

¹⁶ See for an extensive systematic critique of *Parecon*, “Participatory Economics (Parecon) and Inclusive Democracy”, *The International Journal of INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY*, Vol.1, No.2 (January 2005) http://www.inclusivedemocracy.org/journal/vol1/vol1_no2_IDvsParecon.htm

¹⁷ Stephen Shalom, “Question & Answer on the Iran Crisis”, *Znet*, July 08 2009 , <http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21919>

There is a foolish argument in some sectors of the left that holds that any state that is opposed by the U.S. government is therefore automatically playing a progressive, anti-imperialist role and should be supported. On these grounds, many such "leftists" have acted as apologists for murderous dictators like Milosevic and Saddam Hussein. The Campaign for Peace and Democracy has always argued that we can oppose U.S. imperial policy without thereby having necessarily to back the states against which it is directed.

Thus, in this view, we do not have to examine the reasons for the Western demonisation of Milosevic or Saddam but instead we should accept it at face value and proceed to implicitly (if not explicitly) endorse the Western campaigns for regime change, although we should keep condemning at the same time both the transnational elite and the "rogue" regimes.

Of course, neither Milosevic nor Saddam was an angel, as I tried to show elsewhere¹⁸ but they were still expressing the wishes of huge popular movements in their countries for political independence from the transnational elite. Furthermore, the historical role of the Left when such huge conflicts were taking place was not to stay on the sidelines and condemn both combatants but instead to side always against the elites which represent the system itself, i.e. in this case against the transnational elite. One therefore really wonders what sort of "Left" we have today, which in all the major conflicts of our era that actually fixed the contours of the New World Order, it either explicitly or implicitly endorsed the criminal regime change campaigns, exactly as Shalom and the rest do today when they demonise the Iranian regime and prepare the peoples all over the world for the "Big Blow" against the Iranian people being planned —supposedly in order to protect them from a tyrannical regime! No wonder that when Shalom asks himself whether the "pro-democracy movement in Iran "plays into the hands of U.S. imperialism" he replies that "on the contrary, a people's pro-democracy movement is the worst fear of the many authoritarian regimes on which Washington relies to maintain its hegemony; such as the rulers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Pakistan and elsewhere". No coincidence that no member-country of the transnational elite is in his list!

But, there is a question which we, in turn, could ask Shalom and company in relation to his conclusion to this ludicrously biased Q&A:

"What was wrong with Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003 was *not* that the regime of Saddam Hussein was overthrown – his was a hideous regime and anyone concerned with human decency wanted it ended".

Question: Is the Zionist Israeli regime also a hideous regime and anyone concerned with human decency want it ended, particularly after its latest Gaza massacre, when even the UN and NGOs accused it of huge war crimes? If yes, why Shalom & co never asked for the immediate cut off of any kind of state or private US aid to it –something that would have ended their crimes long ago, particularly if they had applied it once they began them, following the 1967 occupation of most of Palestine?

¹⁸ See references in footnotes 11 (ch1) & 2 (this chapter)

Then, there was Robert Dreyfuss's¹⁹ report, which supposedly provides statistical proof of the rigging of the Iranian elections on the basis of a study by a supposedly "independent" think tank (if such a thing exists!) but, in fact, by the well known Chatham House, on the "ubiasedness" of which I commented above. But, who is Robert Dreyfuss the **Nation's** man in Tehran? Here is an extract of an article on him by Bill Van Auken, a writer in the World Socialist web site²⁰:

In its coverage of the recent political upheavals in Iran, the position of the *Nation* magazine, the self-styled voice of progressive politics, has become increasingly indistinguishable from that of the US political establishment. Robert Dreyfuss, the magazine's principal correspondent on the Iranian events—and on "politics and national security" generally—has parroted the unverified charge of a stolen election and characterized the incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as well as his supporters, as a "virtual fascist movement."... The *Nation* describes Dreyfuss merely as "an investigative journalist in Alexandria, Virginia, specializing in politics and national security." Nowhere does it inform its readers that its principal correspondent on Iran is a former member of a fascistic organization who publicly defended the Shah's dictatorship.(!)

Finally, Znet did not have any qualms to publish a dishonest "Open letter to the workers of Venezuela on Hugo Chávez's support for Ahmadinejad",²¹ presumably by a group of Iranian expatriates based in London, who, like those based in the USA – either using their academic posts or other public relations posts– did everything they could to disorient people in the Left about what is actually going on in Iran. As Eric Walberg²² pointed out in his Zspace page, (in one of the rare exceptions to the general line on Iran hosted exactly in order to create the pseudo impression of "objectivity"):

"The US has generously financed Iranian expatriate dissidents and has penetrated Iranian society with the clear intent to overthrow Ahmedinejad, exactly like they did in Venezuela, though it is rarely mentioned in the Western press"

In this letter, the group, supposedly representing the "Revolutionary Marxists of Iran" (!) explicitly aims to disorient the "workers and students" of Venezuela and beyond declaring that Chavez "with his support for Ahmadinejad has ignored the solidarity of the workers and students of Iran with your revolution, and in a word, made it look worthless". And it concludes with one of the most disgusting statements supposedly issued by supporters of the Left:

Only the unity of the real representatives of the workers and toilers can confront imperialism...Stand together with the Iranian workers and condemn the foreign

¹⁹ Robert Dreyfuss, "The Next Explosion in Iran" , *Znet*, June 22, 2009

<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21766>

²⁰ Bill Van Auken, " The **Nation's** man in Tehran: Who is Robert Dreyfuss? World Socialsit Web Site, 22 June 2009 <http://wsws.org/articles/2009/jun2009/drey-j22.shtml>

²¹ Maziar Razi, *Maziar Razi's ZSpace Page* (Source: London Progressive Journal July 12, 2009)

²² By Eric Walberg, "Venezuela & Iran: Whither the revolutions?", *Znet* ,July 12, 2009

<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21973>

policy of your leaders. Support for Ahmadinejad means support for the repression of Iranian workers and youth. Challenge the flawed positions of Chavez and reject them.

So, the middle classes who demonstrated in the roads of Tehran, together with the conservative supporters of the reformist clerics within various social groups, suddenly became “the Iranian workers”, despite the fact that the real Iranian workers, particularly those working in the petro-chemical industry which absorbs the bulk of the Iranian working class, neither organised any strike in favour of the unholy alliance nor took part in the recent demonstrations, as some postmodernist Iranian “anarchists” who are in favour of the pink revolution fully expected!²³

Similarly, Znet hosted statements from obscure “revolutionary Marxist” organisations like that of the “Revolutionary Marxist Current (Venezuela)”,²⁴ which, also, referred to the inconsistencies of the Iranian regime with its anti-imperialist rhetoric that I also mentioned above. However, their novelty is the historical conclusion they drew, according to which “the power of the Islamic Republic was consolidated over what had been a working class and anti-imperialist revolution”. However, even though it is true that there have been such currents among workers and other participants in the 1979 revolution, there is no doubt that they were marginal, otherwise no Islamists would ever have been able to smash them. The very fact that the Islamic regime and its constitution were approved by overwhelming majorities soon after the revolution speaks for itself. As Dilip Hiro²⁵ described the process:

Although his (Khomeini's) revolutionary movement included secularists, only the religious segment was capable, via the mosque, of providing a national organizational network down to the village level. Both as an institution and a place of congregation, the mosque proved critical. Since the state could not suppress the mosque in a country that was 98% Muslim, it offered a sanctuary to the revolutionary movement. That was why Khomeini instructed the clergy to base the Revolutionary Komitehs (Committees) coordinating the anti-Shah movement in those mosques. It was in this way that the unprecedented upheaval, claiming an estimated 10,000 to 40,000 lives (largely unarmed Iranians killed by military gunfire), turned into the successful "Islamic revolution."

However, to assert that there was initially a workers revolution which was then smashed by the Islamists is one of the usual exaggerations of “revolutionary Marxists”, although there is no doubt that the new regime consolidated its power by attacking those it considered its enemies. In other words, revolutionary workers and the changes they attempted in terms of worker's power would obviously have been

²³ See the *ALB Noticias* interview with the Iranian expatriate anarchist *Payman Pieder*, on 26 Jun 2009 (in Greek translation blog.stigalaria.org)
<http://blog.stigalaria.org/2009/06/26/anarikh-matia-sto-iran/>

²⁴ Revolutionary Marxist Current (Venezuela): “Solidarity with the Iranian masses”, *Znet*, July 12, 2009
<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21972>

²⁵ Dilip Hiro, “The Clash of Islam and Democracy in Iran”

the enemies of a theocratic regime.

But, only a fool could characterise himself a revolutionary Marxist, particularly when living in Venezuela, if he cannot realize that once the New World Order consolidates itself in the entire Mid East, following a regime change in Iran, the Venezuelan regime would be one of the very first targets of the US elite!

In contrast, however, to this massive support by Zwriters and associates for the pink revolution in Iran, commentators in the Znet forum put forward very negative comments on the kind of “alternative” information provided by the Znet empire on Iran. Here is a sample of such comments:

“The articles on Zmag condemning fraud sound like they are straight out of Fox news with circumstantial evidence”.²⁶

And another:

“Znet, like nearly every other 'alternative' internet site, has proven that it is nothing but a worthless source of right wing propaganda”.²⁷

And another:

“In short - it is a piece of propaganda, without much proof, but one, unfortunately, got used to such thing in Znet (at least regarding Iran)”²⁸

Yet, this kind of misinformation by Znet did not prevent Noam Chomsky to declare on a recent occasion:²⁹

Znet has proven to be an invaluable source of information while also providing unparalleled opportunities for interchange about ongoing events and innovative possibilities for activism and serious work for social change. As it expands worldwide, it has helped substantially to carry forward the form of globalization that has always been a dream of the left: globalization in the interest of people, not investors, based on solidarity, mutual aid, and cooperative efforts to confront the great problems of today and to lay the basis for a more humane and decent world tomorrow.

²⁶Keegan, Keegan “Touchy subjects!”, July 13, 2009-07-24
<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21973#12442>

²⁷ Kane, Paul “Comment on Shalom”, 8 July 2009
<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21919#12399>

²⁸ Nikonov, Alla, “Comment on Shalom”, July 7 2009
<http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/21919#12386>

²⁹ Noam Chomsky greeting the inauguration of Hellenic PP's ZSpace Page
<http://www.zcommunications.org/zspace/group/HNPS>

Conclusion

The future will show whether the reformist Left's stand on Iran will be justified or whether instead—following its similar stand on the wars against Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, the so-called 'war on terror' etc— it will confirm beyond any doubt the complete bankruptcy of this kind of "Left" and the imperative need for the building of a new truly antisystemic Left, like the one proposed by the Inclusive Democracy (ID) project.