



Brandeis University

Crown Center
for Middle East Studies

Mailstop 010
Waltham, Massachusetts
02454-9110

781-736-5320
781-736-5324 Fax
www.brandeis.edu/crown

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The Power Struggle in Iran: A Centrist Comeback?

Dr. Naghmeh Sohrabi

An Iranian president is under attack, engaged in a power struggle against the country's clerical ruling class and accused of deviating from religious heterodoxy. His days are clearly numbered. The parliament against which he has been at odds throughout his presidency is only too pleased to begin deliberating his impeachment. Shortly before the parliament's impeachment vote, some of his closest allies are arrested and executed. In Friday prayers, the Supreme Leader blames the country's "ills" and "backwardness" on him. For months leading up to this, the Supreme Leader has been warning the country of the dangers of political bickering and factionalism; but in the end, he comes out against the president, who is deposed in a parliamentary vote. After days in hiding, the now ex-president is smuggled out of the country and casts himself as an opposition leader to the Islamic Republic. His ouster is believed to have consolidated clerical rule in Iran.

The time of these events, however, is June 1981, not 2011. The president was Abolhassan Bani Sadr, the Islamic Republic's first president; and the then Supreme Leader was the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Yet the specter of the only impeached president of the Islamic Republic seems to be hanging over the head of its current president, as the power struggle between Mahmud Ahmadinejad and the current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has come to a head. Not surprisingly, the semi-official Fars News Agency has been posting over the past month a series

Naghmeh Sohrabi is the Associate Director for Research at the Crown Center.

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of articles about the deposed president Bani Sadr, focusing on his anti-clerical stance, his ambition for more power, and his treason toward the Islamic Republic.¹

This Brief examines the power struggle between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei and their respective factions since the contested presidential election in 2009. Specifically, it argues that Iran's ruling elite have come to see Ahmadinejad and his faction as a threat to the Islamic Republic, and in coming to this realization seem to have chosen to move closer to more centrist² political actors, such as ex-presidents Mohammad Khatami and Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, as a way of safeguarding the Islamic Republic of Iran against the threat that Ahmadinejad poses in his attempt to expand executive powers.

The Leadership vs. The System

In May 2011, Ahmad Tavakoli, a principlist MP³ and one of the most vocal critics of Ahmadinejad in Parliament, stated in an interview that “[i]n those days [in the run-up to the 2009 presidential election], I told my previous campaign managers in the provinces and friends with whom I still [had] a relationship that Mr. Mousavi [Mir Husayn, a candidate in the 2009 presidential election] has the kind of social base that even if [this is] not his . . . intention has the power to socially agitate against the [Supreme] leadership. But Mr. Ahmadinejad has the kind of social base that even if he wants it to, does not have the power to socially agitate against the leadership.”⁴

Tavakoli's purpose for making this statement was to explain why, even though he “never defended” Ahmadinejad in the 2009 election and even though he told many people that he feels voting for him is “forbidden” [*haram*], he still cast an “emergency vote” for him.

Tavakoli's reading of the social bases of each of the two main candidates in the 2009 election is revealing. The coalition that was formed during Mousavi's presidential campaign was broad-based and included a politically wide spectrum of people, ranging from those (the reformist centrists) who believed that the future of the Islamic Republic lay in reforming the system to those who saw in Mousavi the possibility of regime change, albeit a gradual one. By contrast, Ahmadinejad's base comprised the large swath of Iranian society that was socially, politically, culturally, and economically invested in the Islamic Republic.

Tavakoli seems to have chosen his words carefully here. The issue at hand was not confronting the *nizam* [system], but rather confronting the *rahbari* [leadership]. While in ordinary political discourse the words “system” and “leadership” are at times used interchangeably, they highlight an important distinction that runs through the politics of the Islamic Republic. In Iranian politics, the term *rahbari* refers not to the leadership in general but to that of the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, and can connote either allegiance to him or allegiance to the office of the Supreme Leader generally. It is this distinction between the political system of the Islamic Republic and the office and person of the Supreme Leader that has allowed politicians like Tavakoli—people who are considered to be some of the most vocal opponents of Ahmadinejad on the Right of the political spectrum—to close ranks against the reformists and to cast “emergency votes” in favor of someone whom they consider at the very least incompetent in running the affairs of state.

The Leader vs. The President

Whereas the system and the leadership are intertwined in the minds of many politicians on the “Right” of the political spectrum, those on the periphery of Ahmadinejad’s circle of supporters have until now given priority to the latter over the former. In a series of interviews conducted with various political supporters of Ahmadinejad in January of 2010, almost every single explanation of support was framed in terms of the president’s devotion to the leader. For example, Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel, former speaker of Parliament and current MP from the principlist faction, noted that his support for Ahmadinejad was based on his “belief in Imam [that is, Khomeini], the Revolution, and the exalted position of the leader [Khamenei].”⁵ By making allegiance to the *rahbari* the central reason for supporting Ahmadinejad, even his critics, such as MP Tavakoli, were able to “forgive” Ahmadinejad’s clearly stated policy of “doing things differently”⁶ within the *nizam* or system, and to use him, as they did in 2009, to neutralize and, some would say, decimate the reformists.

One of the main questions that underlay Muhammad Khatami’s two terms as president (1997–2005) was whether it was possible to meaningfully reform the system of the Islamic Republic without questioning the office of the Supreme Leader. Some of the most important disagreements between reformist centrists and more radical reformers revolved precisely around whether or not to cross the red line of *rahbari* and in calling for reforms, to also call for reform of the system’s highest office. It was on the basis of this issue, and the perception that reforms would inevitably threaten the *rahbari*, that the principlist movement was born. At the heart of the movement was the notion that allegiance to the person and office of the Supreme Leader or *rahbar* superseded all other allegiances, implicitly including allegiance to the system or *nizam* itself. With the 2005 presidential election, this movement became mainstream and found what seemed like the perfect figurehead in the person of Ahmadinejad.⁷

The principlist movement was never clearly defined and from the beginning its principles appeared to be under intense debate. Very quickly after Ahmadinejad’s victory in the 2005 election, the movement officially broke down into various factions, most notably into those aligned with the government and those in opposition to it. In general terms, the former were found mostly in the executive branch and the latter in the legislative, and their differences were initially mostly reflected in, and intensely debated over, budget issues and the overall economic management of the country. The sometimes intense conflict over the budget between Ahmadinejad and the legislative branch was the beginning of his push to expand executive powers beyond what had been seen before.

Tavakoli’s comments above are an example of the ways in which the 2009 threat of a “reformist” takeover and the perception of the threat that reformists represented to the *rahbari* temporarily united the various principlist and traditional conservative factions. In the aftermath of the contested election of 2009, much speculation occurred as to who was the mastermind behind this watershed moment in the history of the Islamic Republic. (The finger was often pointed at Ali Khamenei’s son, Mujtaba, and at the Islamic Republic Guards Corps [IRGC].) But in the past two years, it has become increasingly clear that the decision (or at least the desire) to, seemingly irrevocably, cut the reformists out of institutionalized politics—by interfering in the 2009 election, and conducting widespread arrests, followed by show trials, in their aftermath—though it may have originated at the highest levels of the Iranian government, had the support of a wide spectrum of the political elite. In making a bargain with the proverbial devil, this segment of the elite, at that point, believed that neither Ahmadinejad himself nor his social base posed a threat to the linchpin of the Islamic Republic: the Supreme Leadership.

All of this began to change shortly after the 2009 election and the violent crackdown on the protests that followed it. The extremely high number of votes (more than 24 million) attributed to Ahmadinejad became the president’s trump card in his subsequent battles not only with the parliament but also with other branches of the Iranian political system. Ahmadinejad began to invoke what he claimed was his confirmed popular mandate to push back against almost every institution of the Islamic Republic, including the parliament, the Guardian Council, the clergy in Qum, and eventually the Supreme Leader himself. In the case of the Supreme Leader, the April 2011 spat between Ahmadinejad and Khamenei over the dismissal of the minister of intelligence, Heydar Moslehi, was only the most direct and public manifestation of a power struggle over executive powers that had been brewing since 2009.

In July 2009, for example, shortly after Ahmadinejad appointed the controversial Rahim Mashaie⁸ as his first vice president, Khamenei wrote a letter to Ahmadinejad advising that the appointment was “against your and the administration’s interest and is the cause of division among and denunciation by your supporters.” The letter, which demanded that Mashaie be removed from office, was not initially made public, and only *became* public after Ahmadinejad ignored it for six days. Even after the letter was published, Ahmadinejad waited for close to a day before dismissing Mashaie as vice president. What

stands out in this story is the letter Ahmadinejad wrote to Khamenei in response, notifying him “that your letter of July 18th was executed in accordance with article 57 of the constitution.”⁹ What did not escape close observers was the wording of this letter: Ahmadinejad was implementing the Supreme Leader’s order not because of the latter’s religious standing and authority—that is, in recognition of his role as the *rahbar* [leader]—but in accordance with the constitution. Having done what he decided he constitutionally had to do, Ahmadinejad promptly appointed Mashaie as his chief of staff.¹⁰

The resistance to the *rahbar* and the religious orthodoxy that he represented continued in full force a year later when, in August of 2010, the same Mashaie gave a talk where he compared the Iranian school of Islam to “other interpretations of Islam” and maintaining that the Iranian school was superior. “Without Iran, Islam would be lost,” he declared; “if we want to present the truth of Islam to the world, we should raise the Iranian flag.”¹¹ What Mashaie was understood to be advocating was a nationalist/populist interpretation of Islam highlighting Iranian exceptionalism. But this idea of an “Iranian Islam” that is superior to Islam itself went against the entire grain of the clerical bodies in Qum and prompted harsh reaction from clerics such as Ayatollah Jannati, whose support of Ahmadinejad had been clear in the run-up to the 2009 election and who, as head of the Guardian Council, critically rejected demands by Mousavi and Karrubi for a recount after the election of 2009. Condemnation also came from Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, the radical cleric believed to have been Ahmadinejad’s “spiritual advisor.” Nonetheless, Ahmadinejad withstood direct calls asking for Mashaie’s resignation, insisting that “nobody should be condemned for voicing his viewpoints.”¹²

Shortly thereafter, in yet another controversial move, Ahmadinejad announced the creation of four foreign affairs envoy positions, and appointed Rahim Mashaie as his Middle East envoy. This move was widely read as yet another attempt by the president to extend his executive powers—this time into the foreign policy realm, which had traditionally been controlled by the Supreme Leader. In response, Khamenei, in a speech to the cabinet, warned that “duplication in various fields, including in the foreign-policy arena, must be avoided and ministers should be trusted within the framework of their authorities and responsibilities.”¹³ Ahmadinejad’s only acknowledgment of the Supreme Leader’s objection, however, was to change the designation of the position from “envoy” to “representative.”

In December of the same year, Ahmadinejad summarily dismissed Manuchehr Mottaki, who had served as foreign

minister since 2005 and who was believed to have been at the very least approved by Khamenei if not chosen by him. Mottaki had, in addition, been against the creation of the foreign affairs envoys, believing that it was a move meant to undermine the foreign ministry. His dismissal caused an uproar in political circles and in Parliament, but the Supreme Leader did not intervene. Ahmadinejad then appointed Ali Akbar Salehi, from within his inner circle, as the new foreign minister.

At the time, the events outlined above were seen as isolated moments of disagreement between a “puppet” president and an all-powerful leadership. Conventional knowledge among analysts had been that power ultimately lay in the hands of Khamenei and that Ahmadinejad, despite his unprecedented actions against some of the most powerful institutions of power in Iran, was essentially powerless. This argument has been further strengthened in three respects. First, in the April fight over the dismissal of the minister of intelligence, Khamenei clearly had the last word, and Moslehi remained in the cabinet. This was a victory not only for Khamenei but also for the parliament, which opposed the forced resignation of Moslehi and which, with the backing of the Supreme Leader, managed to limit Ahmadinejad’s executive power.

Second, Ahmadinejad’s leadership style, his loyalty to the controversial Mashaie, and his confrontations with the Supreme Leader have led to the shrinking of his circle of supporters among the political elite. In January 2010, the weekly *Iran Dokht* displayed three intersecting circles of Ahmadinejad supporters, starting with those closest to him, who approve of both his and Mashaie’s leadership and many of whom served in his first cabinet. The second circle, most of them clergymen, were those that according to *Iran Dokht* liked the president but did not like his chief of staff. These included people like Jannati, head of the Guardian Council, and Fatemeh Rajabi, wife of Gholam-Hossein Elham, a former minister of justice and government spokesperson. The third circle included those who “despite having serious criticisms even toward Mahmud Ahmadinejad himself, support him as a way of supporting the Islamic Republic’s system.” These were, in other words, politicians who saw Ahmadinejad, with all his problems, as the best line of defense against the real threat—that is, reformists. This circle included Hossein Saffar Harandi, who resigned his post as minister of culture in 2009 in protest against Mashaie’s appointment as vice president.¹⁴

What is striking is that, in the fewer than two years since the article was first published, the inner circle of the president’s supporters have shrunk even more. A notable example is the aforementioned Fatemeh Rajabi, one of the

president's fiercest supporters and author of *Ahmadinejad: The Miracle of the Third Millennium*, who recently announced that the popularity of Ahmadinejad will persist only for as long as he is obedient to the Supreme Leader.¹⁵ In contrast, the intersecting circles of the principlists in opposition to the government—for example, Speaker of Parliament Ali Larijani—not only have not shrunk but seem to have been emboldened by recent events.

A third factor is the well-known but little mentioned family ties that exist between most of the Iranian ruling elite, extending to both conservatives and reformists. Many of the main political actors in Iran are tied to each other through marriage, have important ethnic ties, and are part of “political families.” Ali Khamenei’s son, for example, is married to the daughter of Haddal Adel; Ali Larijani is married to the daughter of Ayatollah Motahhari, of whom Khamenei is a devotee; and Muhammad Khatami is married to the niece of the cleric Musa al-Sadr. Members of political families are also found throughout the political system, sometimes on different sides of political debates: Hadi Khamenei, the younger brother of the Supreme Leader and a leading reformist in the 1990s; the Hashemi family; and the Larijani brothers, sons of another Grand Ayatollah, who occupied various posts in the system.

Ahmadinejad and his supporters, on the other hand, stand out as being outside of these family networks. Ahmadinejad’s son, it is true, is famously married to Mashaie’s daughter—a family tie that is often invoked to explain Ahmadinejad’s strong loyalty to his chief of staff. Yet Ahmadinejad’s circle seem to lack the historical family ties that bind the rest of the elite to each other. These weak roots within the system help explain both Ahmadinejad’s desire to upend “the system” and also why his power and ability to withstand the system when it turns against him seem transitory.

The Changing Balance of Power

In May of 2011, rumors about Ahmadinejad’s possible impeachment gained strength. Official and semi-official news agencies began a campaign against what was dubbed “the deviancy movement”—reportedly a trend among some politicians, all of them close to the president, who believe in heterodox religious beliefs, particularly “sorcery” and the imminent return of the Twelfth Imam. Nearly a dozen government officials were arrested and imprisoned as a result.¹⁶ Rahim Mashaie, while not arrested, was implicated as a central part of this movement, and questions were raised regarding the involvement of the president as well.

Yet, although all the necessary pieces are in place for a possible impeachment—loss of support among previous allies, sustained criticism among principlist detractors, public defiance of the Supreme Leader, and close connections to a sacreligious belief condemned by the clerics—by all indications, Bani Sadr’s fate does not await the current president. The Iran of 2011 is not that of 1981 when the regime was consolidating power, and the country was in the midst of a low-scale internal war and a full-scale external one with Iraq. Thus, principlist MP Ismail Kawsari declared in a recent interview that despite its being tainted by this “deviancy” movement, “the government is the government of the Islamic Republic and must run out its four years.”¹⁷ Similarly, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, while strongly condemning the deviancy movement and the hand of Satan he saw in it, reacted to the accusations against Ahmadinejad by asserting that “[i]t is wrong not to vote just because we find defects in officials. Rather, in every choice [which could also be translated “election”], we must choose the relative best.”¹⁸

Ahmadinejad’s unprecedented defiance of Ali Khamenei can be understood in two ways. First, it is in large part connected to the latter’s loss of legitimacy in the aftermath of the 2009 election and the nature of the violence used to put down the ensuing protests. By breaking with thirty years of politics in Iran—by clearly siding with one faction over others and endorsing, if not a rigged election, than a clear break with the ways in which elections had been conducted in the Islamic Republic—by threatening bloodshed and keeping silent throughout the events that followed; and by attempting to marginalize important political families such as the Hashemis, Khamenei weakened his own position within the unique political framework of Iran. Ironically, it was his backing of Ahmadinejad that weakened the Supreme Leader, tilting the balance of power between the two in Ahmadinejad’s favor.

Second, Khamenei’s stance vis-à-vis the 2009 election not only weakened his legitimacy politically, but also affected his social base. Contrary to popular opinion, no office in the Islamic Republic has absolute power: Real power derives not only from the constitution but also from the actual practice of politics and from the social bases that underlie that practice. Even if we accept the conventional wisdom that Khamenei’s support comes mainly from the Revolutionary Guards and the clerics in Qum, we must still recognize that the power of both the clergy and the Revolutionary Guards is not merely institutional, but is rooted in patronage networks requiring a social base. These two social bases, furthermore, are interconnected both with each other and with those of political figures such as Rafsanjani and Khatami (both clerics with

revolutionary credentials); and both were shaken, if not stirred, in the aftermath of the 2009 election. Conversely, while Ahmadinejad's social base may be less than the more than 24 million people he claims, he is not without one, either within the population or among the political elite. This does not make Ahmadinejad all-powerful, but he is clearly not just a puppet, either. His defiance of the Iranian political system has led to the realization among the ruling elite that the threat to the leadership, as well as to the system itself, comes not from the centrists and reformists but from Ahmadinejad and his faction.

A Return of the Centrists?

On the anniversary of the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, on June 4, 2011, the Iranian political *nizam* (system) came out in full force to present a less fractious face than the one that had been on display in the media in the previous months. Photos appeared of Ahmadinejad smiling, sandwiched between Hassan Khomeini, the founder's grandson, and the judiciary chief, Sadeq Larijani, himself seated next to Hashemi Rafsanjani. What is striking is the difference from the politics of exactly a year prior, as they were reflected in this annual event. On June 4, 2010, Hassan Khomeini was heckled off stage at his grandfather's tomb by supporters of Ahmadinejad, after Ahmadinejad had taken up much of the allotted time for Khomeini's speech.¹⁹ This year, the same grandson was seen sitting next to the president and cordially chatting with him.

The tone and content of the two speeches by Ali Khamenei, on June 4, 2010, and on the same date in 2011, show that the "system" has chosen to close ranks as a way of taming the unruly president rather than ousting him. In his 2010 speech, Khamenei attacked the opposition leaders. In indirectly addressing people like Mousavi and Karrubi—politicians who had been sidelined since 2009 but who could claim impeccable revolutionary credentials—Khamenei made clear that past affiliations (Mousavi had been prime minister in the time of Khomeini's leadership, for example—and during Khamenei's own presidency) meant little: "The criteria is today's position," he insisted. The speech, along with yet another fiery one by Ahmadinejad, wherein he once again asserted his popular legitimacy by reminding his audience of his more than 24 million votes, clearly indicated a leadership confident in its grab of power and ready to combat its opponents at any cost.²⁰

Khamenei's speech exactly a year later, again on the anniversary of Khomeini's death, stood out for several reasons. First, at a time when Mousavi and Karrubi are under house arrest and many reformist activists and

journalists are still in prison, it was striking for Khamenei to assert that there is no reason to "take away justice and security" from someone just because we don't like their political beliefs. More importantly, however, Khamenei used two words that in the Islamic Republic's lexicon are clearly coded and pregnant with meaning. He first spoke of "rationality" [*aqlaniyyat*] as one of the three pillars of Khomeini's school of thought. That term was one of the key words of the Rafsanjani presidency (1989–97); it conveyed his commitment to running the country's political and economic affairs less on the basis of ideology and more in the service of reason and practicality. Khamenei also used the term *mardomsalari* or "rule of the people"—this a watchword of the Khatami presidency. "Rule of the people based on religion," Khamenei noted, is the bedrock of the country's political system, and the most visible manifestation of the Imam's [that is, Khomeini's] rationality."²¹ It is difficult to hear these terms in the context of the Islamic Republic's political discourse and not realize that the speech was meant, if not as a conciliatory gesture toward Khatami and Rafsanjani, then, at the very least, as a rebuke to the current president, who has over the past six years explicitly indicated that his presidency is by intention the exact opposite of the administrations conducted by those two previous presidents.

The differences in the two speeches by Khamenei, in the context of the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2012 and the recent power struggle over the minister of intelligence (one of the main ministries that influence elections in Iran), strongly suggest that the *rahbari* has come to the realization that the future of the "system" lies elsewhere than with the current president. After the past several years of implying that the presidencies of Khatami and Rafsanjani were "deviations" from the path of the Islamic Republic, there is now an understanding that the survival of the political system requires that these two centrist ex-presidents be brought back into the fold of politics. In the opaque political system of the Islamic Republic, all signs seem to point toward a return to centrist politics—one in which the multiplicity of groups vying for power ensures that the power scale does not tip in favor of one over the other.

Endnotes

- 1 For some examples, see www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=9002180184; www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8703310208; and www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=8807070704.*
- 2 I do not use the term “centrist” here to mean center of the political spectrum in terms of ideology. Rather, I am using it to connote those in the Iranian political system who believe that Ahmadinejad’s policies are threatening to radically change the political system in Iran, and that the survival of the Islamic Republic depends on a return to the center, though where that center is remains unclear and varies among the different political actors.
- 3 “[P]rincipalist’ is the term now used to refer to an array of forces that previously identified themselves as conservative, fundamentalist, neo-fundamentalist, or traditionalist. It developed as a counter to the term *eslahgara*, or reformist, and is applied to a camp of not necessarily congruous groups and individuals. (The same applies to the reformist camp.)” Farideh Farhi, “Iran’s 2008 Majlis Elections: The Game of Elite Competition,” *Middle East Brief*, no. 29 (Brandeis University: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, May 2008).*
- 4 <http://www.daneshjoonews.com/news/politics/7407-1390-02-30-08-21-35.html>.*
- 5 “Arbab-i Halqa-ha” [Lord of the Rings], *Iran Dokht*, no. 46, 10 Bahman 1388 [January 2010], p. 19.
- 6 <http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/169211>.*
- 7 For an analysis of factional politics during Ahmadinejad’s first term, see Naghmeh Sohrabi, “Conservatives, Neoconservatives and Reformists: Iran after the Election of Mahmud Ahmadinejad,” *Middle East Brief*, no. 4 (Brandeis University: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, April 2006).*
- 8 Among the various reasons for controversy surrounding Mashaie was his 2008 comment that Iranians are friends of all people, including Americans and Israelis. His comments created such a stir that roughly 200 out of 209 parliamentarians asked for his dismissal, to no avail. Nazila Fathi, “Israelis as Friends? Iran Legislators Say No,” *New York Times*, August 13, 2008.*
- 9 Article 57 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran states that “The powers of government in the Islamic Republic are vested in the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive powers, functioning under the supervision of the absolute wilayat al-’amr [supreme leader] and the leadership of the Ummah, in accordance with the forthcoming articles of this Constitution. These powers are independent of each other. “For the full text of the constitution in English see <http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution.html>.*
- 10 “Ahmadinejad Appoints Mashaie as his Chief of Staff; Leader Fired First Vice-President,” *Rooz* 1433, July 27, 2009.*
- 11 Robert Tait, “Iranian President’s New ‘Religious-Nationalism’ Alienates Hard-Line Constituency,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 18, 2010.*
- 12 “Ahmadinejad Backs VP Mashaie over Islam Remarks, Says [Has Confidence in] Him,” *Payvand Iran News*, August 12, 2010.*
- 13 Golnaz Esfandiari, “Ahmadinejad Encroaches on Supreme Leader’s Foreign-Policy Turf,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 8, 2010.*
- 14 “Arbab-i Halqah-ha,” *Iran Dokht Weekly*, pp. 16–17.
- 15 <http://www.asriran.com/fa/news/163149>.*
- 16 Farnaz Fassihi, “Rough Spell for Iranian Politics: President’s Staff Accused of Sorcery,” *Wall Street Journal*, June 10, 2011.*
- 17 <http://www.ghatreh.com/news/7468274.html>.*
- 18 <http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/169039>.*
- 19 Naghmeh Sohrabi, “Is Nothing Sacred in the Islamic Republic of Iran?” *Middle East Brief*, no. 43 (Brandeis University: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, July 2010).*
- 20 Jay Deshmukh, “Iran Leaders Accuse Opposition of Trampling on Revolution,” *AFP*, June 4, 2010.*
- 21 <http://irna.ir/NewsShow.aspx?NID=30417285>.*

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Brandeis University Crown Center
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Mailstop 010
Waltham, Massachusetts
02454-9110

781-736-5320
781-736-5324 Fax
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