

A NEW IRAN?

THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRACY, DIPLOMACY AND ENERGY



UNIVERSITY of DURHAM

Centre for Iranian Studies

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To achieve this, the Centre encourages links and exchanges between academics and academic institutions in the UK and Iran and hosts lecture series, seminars, workshops and conferences. Furthermore, the Centre for Iranian Studies facilitates the publishing of policy-relevant studies in Policy Briefs aimed at addressing Iranian affairs in a highly academic fashion.

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IRANIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2009 APPRAISAL: EVOLUTION, NOT REVOLUTION

Iran's presidential election of 12 June 2009 was followed outside Iran with an extremely high degree of interest and expectation, which for many ended in a crushing sense of disappointment as Mir Hossein Mousavi was apparently defeated and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad remain in the office. There was already a sense that this could have been the chance when Iran would elect a leader ready to engage meaningfully with the West, perhaps encouraged by the recent US presidential elections and President Obama's diplomatic overtures to the Muslim world, and in particular Iran. Dogged by allegations of smear campaigns in the run-up to polling and scarred by violence afterwards, the outcome has been met with extreme disappointment by many. Intense coverage of the protests in Tehran have continued, the young female student, Neda Soltan, shot dead by security forces, becoming a symbol of the frustration and sense of injustice accompanying the result.

It would be possible to devote many pages examining these sad events. Instead, I raise the key point: that electoral victory is only as impressive as the ability it has

to effect meaningful change. I relate this point to the dire state of Iran's economy. As the Director of this Centre Dr. Reza Molavi has pointed out, "Iran needs major investment in its oil and gas industries which would in turn create wealth, employment, and raise aspirations within the country. The United States would be the prime candidate for new investment, but the

"Steps towards dialogue with Iran must still be taken.....however, patience and politics are uneasy bedfellows."

limit of the imposed sanctions on Iran makes this difficult. In the long-run Iran has no other choice than to compromise on its commitment to the controversial programme. Given the current economic problems Iran faces it can no longer afford high-stakes gambling as the country appears to slide towards a crisis." In other words, realism concerning the economic situation may be more to bear on the nuclear issue that the reformist or conservative convictions of an Iranian president.

Though one is always reluctant to suggest something is "inevitable", it is still worth considering more carefully the shape Iran's near future may take when we consider economic factors as well as the human rights dimension. The conclusions we reach may be more helpful in assessing what the future holds for Iran and how we should react to the result, rather than despairing over the violence unfolding in Tehran.

At a recent talk hosted by the Centre for Iranian Studies on the topic of the 2009 election, a number of questions focused on the possibility for real change in Iran regardless of who was elected. The responses to these questions were that all we can do is hope for continued reform in Iran, and ultimately recognise that such reforms will take time. Ultimately the time has come for the international community to take stock of the reality of the situation and accept that, however slow and painful, the steps towards a meaningful dialogue with Iran can still be taken. Evolution, rather than revolution, may be the most viable way forward. Patience and politics, however, are uneasy bedfellows.

Jennifer Thompson

THE UTILITY OF UNCERTAINTY: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE USE OF DISCOURSES ON THE IRAN-HEZBOLLAH RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between the state of Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah movement is a topic upon which there is much conviction, but little consensus. Elements of the contradictory proclamations from different analysts and commentators can be explained by the realm which any posited relationship inhabits - the murky worlds of sub-State security, arms dealing and transnational religious networks. The closed nature of both the movement and of the Iranian state make the gathering of accurate information extremely difficult. Since the both sides have at least some interest in concealing some aspects of their dealings with each other, it is unsurprising that assessments must often be based upon relatively slight glimpses "behind the curtain". With this acknowledged, however, it is must be noted that the reaction to this uncertainty has not been a dearth of commentary, but rather a deluge. Indeed, the Iran-Hezbollah relationship has become one of the key points of contention for scholars of the ongoing Lebanese-Israeli and Israeli-Iranian confrontations, and a strongly emotive point for popular commentators of all political stripes. It is far beyond the scope of this article, of course, to draw any firm conclusions regarding the actual and material nature

of any relationship between the two subject entities. Indeed, in the current conditions it might be beyond the scope of any commentator to write the definitive assessment of this topic. Instead, we will be looking at the outlines of the debate by commentators, academic and popular. From here, we can begin to assess the use to which these ideas have been put, and how they relate to the policies of regional actors such as Israel and even Hezbollah and Iran themselves. Finally, we will consider the idea that the seemingly incompatible stances and claims put forwards about the Iran/Hezbollah relationship do not necessarily represent a space of ignorance, or one in rapid flux, but in fact serve a function through their very contradictory nature - a topic for possible future enquiry. For the purposes of this investigation, I will be dividing the tendencies of commentators into two streams - those who posit a strong relationship between Hezbollah and Iran and those who posit a weak one. Broadly, a strong relationship understanding will make some or all of the following claims -

A. Iran are the active party in, and primary beneficiary of, much of Hezbollah's decision making and objectives

- B. Hezbollah rarely, if ever, act against the wishes of the Iranian regime
- C. The Iranian government is committed to Hezbollah
- D. Hezbollah should be seen as an extension of the Iranian threat
- E. Hezbollah's end goal is an Iranian-model Islamic state in Lebanon, and should be seen as an attempt to "export" the Iranian revolution.

On the other hand, commentators and sources which posit a weak relationship tend to propose that On the other hand, commentators and sources which posit a weak relationship tend to propose that:

- A. Hezbollah primarily make their decisions based upon internal Lebanese national or confessional pressures
- B. Hezbollah act as the situation demand, even at odds with the Iranian government's wishes
- C. The Iranian government has a pragmatic relationship with Hezbollah
- D. Hezbollah are relatively independent in deciding whether to use violence or not, and should not be viewed as merely a delivery system for Iranian munitions
- E. Hezbollah no longer pursue an Islamic state in Lebanon.

It should be born in mind that not all commentators cited will make all of the claims listed, and that these grouping should be treated more as tendencies than categories. It is also important to note here that these two tendencies differ more often in the significance of a phenomenon rather than it's veracity. The two groups do in fact, usually, agree on points of fact, while but differ wildly in the importance they attach to them.

As a qualifier to the discussion that follows, it might be noted that some of these shifts and inconsistencies can be explained merely by the passage of time and the sequence of events - i.e. the shift from a fear of the Hezbollah/Syria alliance to a Hezbollah/Iranian one coinciding with the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005 and with the election of the more hardline Ahmadinejad in Iran. While this is certainly true, one of the key characteristics of these types of discourses is their atemporal, assembled nature. As noted by Harb and Leenders, it is extremely common to see arguments for the "nature" of Hezbollah (and by extension, the Hezbollah/Iran relationship) based upon selective incidents, presented without context or continuity. Since we are more concerned with the arguments commentators have made than with seeking some definitive answer to the Hezbollah/Iran conundrum, this is not as great a problem as it

could be.

Conceptions of the Hezbollah/Iran relationship are a cornerstone of the competing discourses that surround both entities. In their analysis of Hezbollah scholarship, Harb and Leenders identified two key, opposing, images of the group. The first is a "terroristic" image, which emphasises their transnational features, force projection capabilities and history of violence. The second is the idea that Hezbollah has undergone a process of "Lebanonisation" since it's inception, usually traced from the 1992 entry into electoral politics, which emphasises the movements

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nationalistic, political and social agenda.¹ In addition to the features already cited, the two images also align, to an extent, with our designations of strong and weak relationships respectively. Broadly, those who hold to a terroristic image tend to emphasise and foreground the Iranian connection, while those who maintain the "lebanonised" stance focus far more on domestic relations.² It is worth considering the proponents of both of the strong and the weak relationship understandings in turn, to give an overall impression of the field.

Taking the idea of a strong relationship, we several key sources who promote this understanding. Academically, the most well known proponent of this position is Magnus Ranstorp, most notably in his *Hizb'allah in Lebanon*. This work dwells extensively on the Iranian and Syrian connections of Hezbollah, and traces the major origins of Hezbollah to the arrival of a Pasdaran contingent in the Bekka valley.³

Also of particular note here is the work of the "Foundation for Defence of Democracies" who currently maintain an active "Iran/Hezbollah" project to highlight and promote this position, both in their own research and publications and in the wider press.⁴ Members of the FDD are also responsible for some of the popular discourse around this topic, such as the lurid and sensationalist *Lightning out of Lebanon*, which managed to transform a relatively minor cigarette smuggling and export of dual use equipment charge into an imminent terrorist threat against the United States.⁵ The FDD also maintains Tony Badran as a Levant Research fellow, who runs a widely read commentary blog on Lebanese affairs, with a noticeable focus on the Hezbollah/Iran relationship.⁶ He has been extremely vocal in condemning those who might downplay the connection, whether journalistically, politically or academically.⁷ Mi-

chael Young, of the Beirut Daily Star and Reason magazine, is another notable proponent of a strong relationship concept, even going so far as to state that :

*Is there any real doubt, however, that Hezbollah, as a military and political organization, is an extension of Iran's security and intelligence apparatus and, more broadly, serves Iranian regional interests? Iran's achievement was certainly to anchor Hezbollah in the Lebanese Shi'ite reality, but it is not that reality that explains why Hezbollah is arming Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza...*⁸

Chiming with this view, and fitting it into a broader narrative, is Ronen Bergman, whose *The Secret War With Iran* presents a controversial reinterpretation of Israeli/Iranian relations since 1979 as one of covert belligerence.⁹ The founding and activities of Hezbollah are seen as just another front in this ongoing war.

Martin Kramer, another long time commentator on Hezbollah, also maintains a strong interpretation of the relationship, even going so far as to claim that Hezbollah's armed strength exists not as a deterrent to attacks on Lebanon, but on Iran, and that should Iranian nuclear plans reach fruition, the entire country of Lebanon could become an "Iranian missile launcher"¹⁰

Running counter to this trend of analysis we have those commentators who de-emphasise the Iranian relationship. Most notably, this is to be found in the academic work of Augustus Norton and Judith Palmer Harik.

The former, in his account of the foundation and development of Hezbollah, produces a narrative of initial Iranian involvement in the movement gradually cooling off, and of the transformations that Hezbollah underwent through this period being more a product of competition with rival groups like Amal, than of a deliberate Iranian strategy.¹¹

Judith Palmer Harik has a similar narrative, though she adds an extra layer of complexity to the "cooling" trend in the relationship - that of a split from within the Iranian state between the reformers of the early 1990s (such as Rafsanjani) and the hardliners clustered around Khomeini.¹²

Once again the defining and shaping influence upon Hezbollah are seen to be primarily Lebanese domestic, particularly seeking accommodation with other confessional groups.

One of the most interesting areas where an Iranian/Hezbollah connection is under question is the one area which in which it was assumed most obvious - that is, the joint attacks of the 1980s and early 1990s and the ac-

tivities of the External Security Apparatus with Imad Mugniyeh.

Norton, while admitting that some attacks were very clearly joint efforts, still maintains that many are "generally easier to trace...to Iran than to Hezbollah."¹³

He goes on to quote Robert Baer, a former CIA officer who served in Beirut during the 1980s, who claims that Hezbollah weren't involved in the embassy or barrack attacks, and that both were purely Iranian operations. He attributes the general confusion of these two points to political pressure from a pro-Israeli lobby to set Washington against Hezbollah. Harik also makes similar claims, and raises some doubts over whether Imad Mughniyeh, long thought to be the major link between Hezbollah and Iran, was even an active member of the movement.¹⁴

Nicholas Blanford, a long time commentator on Lebanon, also concurred that "no firm evidence has been produced that he [Mughniyah] takes his orders from Hizballah or has any established organizational link with the group".¹⁵ These claims were all, of course, ridiculed in the aftermath of the Mughniyah assassination of 2008 by those who had maintained a strong relationship understanding between Hezbollah, the external security apparatus and Iran.¹⁶

This is, of course, only a sampling of the different positions, but a broadly representative one, which should highlight some of the key points of contention. When we leave the world of pure commentary, and move on to how the regional actors understand and portray the relationship themselves, we find that we are no closer to unanimity or certainty.

Taking the Israeli position, for example, we see that at different times Hezbollah and its activities have been aligned with different powers to support the policy needs of the day. It should be remembered that Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and war of occupation was not to counter an Iranian or Shi'a threat, but was aimed against Palestinian guerillas and their Lebanese allies. With the emergence of the Hezbollah group in 1985, who professed solidarity with the Palestinian, Israel's imperative for a continued occupation was the fear, initially, that a triumphant Hezbollah might allow the return of Palestinian guerillas to the southern border.¹⁷ In 2002, with the infamous seizure of the Karine A, sailing from the island of Kish in the Persian Gulf, it would have seemed that Israel had clear evidence of a Hezbollah/Iranian axis - but even here they chose to shift the focus onto the Palestinian connections, in the hopes of discrediting Yasser Arafat.¹⁸ In the same year, discussions

with Israeli military personnel about the possibility of Hezbollah border conflict focussed far more on the Syrian connection than the Iranian.¹⁹

By 2006, however, this rhetoric had shifted, and Israeli political figures drawing a direct line between the Iranians and Hezbollah, as a pan-Shi'a movement dedicated to wiping out Israel.²⁰ This would become one of the prevailing trends in Israeli rhetoric about the Iran/Hezbollah relationship, and would find receptive ears in the Bush White House. George W. Bush himself would often cite the Iran/Hezbollah relationship, and indicate that the two threats were closely

Iran maintains a Janus like approach to publicising it's Hezbollah links - at times using Hezbollah as a threat, while simultaneously officially denying has any actual control over them.

related.²¹

What is perhaps most interesting is how Iran and Hezbollah themselves use different understandings of their relationship at different times. Hezbollah, for example, has made a fine art of managing how this relationship is portrayed, particularly in the international press. One particularly amusing example of this comes from an interview with Ibrahim Musawi, Hezbollah's Media Relations figurehead, by David Samuels of the New Republic. Samuels enquired about a

quote by the Deputy Secretary General of the party, Naim Qassem, stating that the decision to enter electoral politics had been dependent upon the approval of Ayatollah Khomeini, and had only taken place with his permission. The indignant Musawi denied this, threw Samuels an English copy of Qassem's writings, and told him to look it up.

In the circumstances, Samuels had to concede the point.²² Subsequently, however, others took it upon themselves to do the research and found that exactly such a quote can be found quite easily in the Arabic edition of Qassem's text.²³ This, however, reveals an interesting trend in how Hezbollah would wish their relationship with Iran understood - at times they make great efforts to downplay it, or to put it in simply religious terms, at others they seem to be very open to discussing it. Hassan Nasrallah, from an interview with Nida al-Watan, would make the interesting claim that the affiliation with the state of Iran is primarily due to Iran's alignment with the designated wilayat al-faqih (Guardian Jurist), in the form of Ayatollah Khameni, than with any sense of political affiliation to the state per se.²⁴ If this is, as seems likely, a deliberate attempt to exaggerate certain characteristics of the relationship, while ignoring others, it is probably a wise tactic.



By protecting its image as “Lebanese” and “Nationalist”, Hezbollah shield themselves from some of the criticism that might be sent their way by critics, both domestic and international.²⁵ Iran, likewise, maintains a Janus like approach to publicising its Hezbollah links - at times using Hezbollah as a threat, while simultaneously officially denying that it is supplying weapons, or has any actual control over them.²⁶ There have been suggestions that Iran has been deliberately restricting what weapons it passes on to its Lebanese ally, driven either by internal dynamics of distrust, or a fear of accidental escalation.²⁷ Indeed, it has been suggested that the nature of the Iranian/Hezbollah relationship is often one of the former restraining the latter, and that Iran is concerned that its ally might trigger a larger, more devastating conflict.²⁸

Tensions: It has been suggested that the nature of the Iranian/Hezbollah relationship is often one of the former restraining the latter, and that Iran is concerned that its ally might trigger a larger, more devastating conflict.



It seems that we have come some way, but run into the impenetrable veil of the “need to know” and the “plausible deniability” that makes collecting high quality information on such sensitive topics so difficult. On the other hand, perhaps there are some lessons to be learned from this. Firstly, it should be obvious that there is nothing even approaching consensus on the exact nature of the Hezbollah/Iran relationship. This is not to say that certain ideas aren't better supported than others, but that it remains beyond the scope of this enquiry to deliver any firm and final answers. Secondly, however, and more interestingly, we can begin to see that this vagueness, this unknown quality, is very useful to the actors involved - in particular, to the vicious triangle of Hezbollah, Iran and Israel. Hezbollah, playing the legitimacy gambit, manages to reap the material rewards of a relationship while keeping its concessions behind closed doors. Because the relationship is an unknown quantity, its cost in

legitimacy is somewhat reduced. Iran enjoys the benefits of a weapon held at a rival's throat, while insulating itself from the consequences of its allies' actions.

Israel has shown a willingness to exploit and realign the nebulous “threat” that Hezbollah's alliances pose to suit its current political needs. Perhaps the most interesting example of an institutionalised ambiguity is the United States. Robert Baer, the aforementioned CIA officer turned analyst, concluded his investigation into the Beirut attacks on US personnel with the following shocking claim:

IJO never existed. It was only a front name the Pasdaran use for communiqués to claim terrorist operations...The CIA knew the Pasdaran's command structure inside and out, just as it knew that Ayatollah Ali Khomeini and President Rafsanjani approved every terrorist operation to come out of Iran...the conclusion was unavoidable: The Islamic

republic of Iran had declared war on the United States and the United States had chosen to ignore it.²⁹

Whether we agree with Baer's conclusion or not, it does suggest some intriguing possibilities. Has the uncertainty of the situation, and the division of analysts, in fact been a liberator from the obligations of action/reaction international struggles? Without this uncertainty, would the situation now be even more unstable, with the United States and Israel facing the possibility of their hands being forced into an all out violent confrontation that neither can easily afford? Is there, in the end, a utility to this uncertainty, a flexibility that a more clear cut situation, without the space for deliberate and organised hypocrisy as policy, would not deliver? In the end, as far as the main players are concerned, is this a situation where in the end nobody, really, “needs to know?”

Edward Parsons

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THE IMPACT OF OIL SCARCITY IN RELATION TO THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND POWER BALANCE: PEAK OIL AND ENERGY POLICY

The abrupt rises in oil prices in recent years coupled with worry about the long-viability of a fossil-based economy have prompted some writers to foretell the coming of a 'new dark age' of Malthusian proportions (Kunstler, 2005). Very little appears to abate the current and soaring demand for oil, at the same time, world oil production reaches its peak. The raw statistics speak for themselves: 3tr barrels of extractable liquid oil are 'proven' to be available to the world. The term 'proven' suggests that there is a 90% chance of it being economically feasible to recover. Factoring in an increase in oil consumption rates of about 1-2% every year, current estimates suggest that there are about 70 years worth of oil left before Planet Earth runs out (Campbell and Laherrere, 1998). Such calculations are far from transparent considering that "there is plenty of room for over-optimism, wishful thinking and outright lying – a 50% 'probable' reserve easily turns into a proven one on paper" (Elhefnawy, 2008, 38). Estimates stay static and or display suspicious change. For example, as many as 300 of the estimated 700bn barrels reported by OPEC countries may be suspect (Campbell and Laherrere, 1998). Undiscovered supplies may counterbalance such

shortfalls, but what is most certain, is that deep *uncertainty* is central to any discussion on rates of oil production.

There is no assurance that any newly discovered supplies will be economically viable and lag times between discovery and production need to be remembered. It takes about 10 years before production at a new site is at an economic scale (Deffeyes, 2001). The rate at which new supplies are found and exploited started falling in the 1960s, and overall consump-

Consumption and production patterns of economies are a function of dependency

tion has outpaced the rate at which oil has been discovered since the 1980s, so that today discoveries replace only 25% of what is consumed each year (Magueri, 2004). Many observers see that there has been too little investment on the part of the energy companies in finding new supplies or increasing production since the 1980s – allowing spare capacity to slip from 15% of the market in 1986 to just 2-3% in 2005 (*ibid.*, 10). This has been attributed to low oil prices in this period, which has further been interpreted as confidence in the future.

The glut of the 1990s and the current high profits experienced by energy companies further exacerbates the lack of investment, in extraction technologies and oil discovery. However, even if the current scarcity of oil is temporary, oil companies will not automatically and gently turn up output when supplies tighten – the question which is addressed next, by the 'peak oil' argument.

Peak oil theory suggests that oil production and extraction, whether of a particular oil field, or the entire world, follows a bell-shaped curve – following an exponential rise, peak, then terminal decline (Hubbard, 1956). Production rates start a return to zero gradually as field-pressure falls once approximately half the oil has been extracted from a particular field. Whilst this theory is criticised for being over-simplistic, it correctly anticipated the US oil production peak in the early 1970s. The world's oil production is today focused in mature, ageing fields where extraction is increasingly expensive (Campbell and Laherrere, 1998, 80). In Saudi Arabia, sea water is mechanically injected into oil fields to "induce artificial lift" (Simmons, 2005, 136) and maintain pressure. As the world's oil fields reach their peak, become bereft of re-

serves and fewer in number themselves, production will become too expensive, and is predicted by this model to reach a global peak sometime between 2010 and 2020 (Dillion, 2005, 3). In reaction, the world must adjust and exploit 'unconventional' sources of liquid oil such as coal and natural gas. It is estimated that the world has a reserve of 6tn barrels of 'heavy' oil, already being mined in Canada and Venezuela (Korner, 2004). Trillions more may be extracted from coal and natural gas,. It is believed by some that one tonne of coal is capable of yielding four barrels (Miller, 1936). In reality, converting such 'heavy' oil stores into liquid is energy intensive – requiring fossil fuels which are themselves scarce, expensive and environmentally dubious.

In terms of converting coal, current methods are a relatively inefficient use of the coal's energy content. Natural gas and coal are estimated to last for 65 and 180 years respectively, at current levels of usage (Energy Information Administration, 2006). Another strain on these resources of energy is the increased and increasing rate of coal-based electrical production and power plant-building, especially in the US and China. Many geologists expect production to peak, perhaps as early as the 2030s in the case of coal, so that the supply will become considerably

more difficult to recover at a given price or level of technological sophistication (Vaux). Even if these estimates are taken at face value (and they may well be too conservative or too optimistic), “linear projections are just as deceptive with gas and coal as they are with oil” (Elhefnawy, 2008, 41). Another limitation of these unconventional oil supplies is that none have been exploited on a scale remotely comparable to that of liquid oil.

Estimated supplies of unconventional oil, by 2025 (11mn/b/d), are unlikely to even cover a tenth of foretasted consumption.(100-125mn/b/d). A declining rate in oil discovery, hyperbole around estimated reserves, and peaking production in mature oil fields will only constrict supplies, and any shortfall will be far-from compensated by

Modern history has seen record high oil prices

any access to unconventional oil. The long-term severity and timing of an oil scarcity crisis is open to debate, but what is sure, at the international geopolitical level, and in terms of security, oil scarcity will have profound implications for the global economy and power balance that cannot be ignored.

What, then, can we say concerning the future of policy in

this area? The fact is the production of oil is still significantly cheaper than other alternative energy sources. It has been reported that though energy sources such solar, wind, geothermal are being rapidly developed and adopted their use is only about 2% of the total. Coal for energy generation can be used as a strategic source for diversification purposes. Coal as a source of energy has had a dirty image because of the levels of carbon emission however the carbon capture storage technology has been developed precisely for the reduction of CO2 that result from process of energy generation. This has serious energy security issues for many oil dependent countries. It is also true that proven oil reserves are larger in Middle Eastern countries. (There are various definitions to such proven oil reserves, probable oil reserves and unproven oil reserves. The major distinction between all of these three definitions is the degree to which they can be exploited in a commercially viable manner. Middle Eastern oil production is certainly commercially viable at the present time).

Therefore, it seems an inescapable that whilst funding is poured into developing alternative forms of energy, many states will walk a tight-rope to balance their diplomatic relations with economic considerations and technological constraints in the years to come.

CONCLUSION:

Geopolitical tensions have raged on largely instigated by governments' attempts to reduce threats to energy securities. The unequal distribution of the natural resource oil which has such a huge impact on the global economy causes power imbalances. In the quest for reliable energy supply governments must diversify their energy sources, ensure the use of energy is efficient to save cost and ensure that not as much energy is wasted and most importantly be more flexible in their long term planning strategies.

Monies must be poured into research and development to have energy efficient technologies. Alternative energy such as Nuclear, Solar, Wind and Hydro power can be devel-

oped further so that they can be used extensively. In the use of nuclear power safety issues, waste disposal, political issues must be at the forefront to better understand this source of energy and its challenges. Unlike oil and gas it doesn't emit CO₂ and SO₂.

The US administration has recently increased investment towards new generation nuclear energy to reduce dependence on foreign imported oil. A cost and benefit analysis must be undertaken to be able to take a proactive stance. The power imbalance continues as long as producers remain in a strong monopolistic position and consumers don't significantly reduce their dependence on oil.

However governments, industry and consumers

must work collaborate to find compelling solutions. Governments of the world would also need to have coordinated effort as due to globalisation economies are interdependent. Globalisation poses different risks that need to be mitigated to reduce supply risk that can have devastating consequences for economies. Energy security is an issue which affects us all.

*Reza Molavi and
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Will alternative energies be able to compete?

The power imbalance between oil producers and consumers persists.



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Dr Reza Molavi is the Executive Director of the Centre for Iranian Studies, at Durham University. Dr. Molavi is also the Executive Editor of The Iranian Journal of National Interest, and a Senior Research Associate at The Centre for Strategic Research, a unit of the Expediency Council of Iran.

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Past and Future CIS Events

Ferdowsi Lecture

Iranian Theocracy & Democracy: Convergence or Contradiction?

Date: 10 December 2008

Time: 11:00-16:00

Venue: Room 102, Al-Qasimi Building, Durham University

Speakers: Prof. Charles Melville, Dr. Mohammad Rasekh, Dr. Ali Paya and Prof. Jalal Dorakhshah

Public Lecture

Human Rights: A Universal Language? Challenge and Obstacles in Iran

Date: 16 February 2009

Time: 12:00

Venue: Room 102, Al-Qasimi Building, Durham University

Speakers: Ms. Roya Kashefi, Head of the Human Rights Committee at the Association des Chercheurs Iraniens

Professor A.K.S.Lambton Memorial Lecture

Sex, Drugs and Rock n'Roll: Ethics, Law and Clerical Authority in post-revolutionary Iran

Date: 04 March 2009

Time: 15:00

Venue: Room 102, Al Qasimi Building (Durham University)

Speaker: Professor Robert Gleave

Iranian Nouruz Party

Date: 14 March 2009

Time: 18:30

Venue: St. Aidan's College, Durham University

Iranian Culture Week

Date: 27 April 2009—1 May 2009

Time: 09:00-21:00

Venue: St. Aidan's College, Durham University

Farabi Lecture

Iran and the International System

Date: 2-3 June 2009

Time: 09:00

Venue: St. Aidan's College, Durham University

Speakers: Various.

Lecture: Iran's Presidential Elections of June 2009

Date: 4 June 2009

Time: 13:00

Venue: Room 102, Al-Qasimi Building, Durham University

Speakers: Dr. Ata'ollah Mohajerani, First Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance under President Khatami, and Dr. Mahboubeh Sadeghinia, Fellow, School of Government and International Affairs

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