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The Israel Lobby, the Neocons, and the Iranian-American Community

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Ever since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected Iran's president in June 2005 and began using strong rhetoric against Israel, the neoconservatives and the Israel lobby have been trying to provoke a war against Iran, or at the very least persuade the United States and the international community to impose crippling sanctions on Iran. Their efforts have been multi-pronged, ranging from spreading exaggerations, half truths, and even outright lies about Iran's nuclear program, to planting anti-Iran articles in the mainstream media, and pressuring the Congress to pass tough Resolutions for sanctions against Iran. The campaign has spread to cyberspace. Every popular Iranian website (such as Iranian.com) has some bloggers who strongly advocate crippling sanctions and even war with Iran, and support Israel's position.

It did not help the antiwar community in the U.S. and Europe that Iran's presidential election of June 12 was rigged, and Ahmadinejad was re-elected fraudulently. The demonstrations against the rigged election and the fact that at least 72 innocent demonstrators were killed generated considerable sympathy around the world for Iran's democratic movement. The Israel lobby and the neocons have been trying to harvest the anger among Iranians about the election to further advocate crippling sanctions against Iran that are, however, opposed strenuously by the leaders of Iran's democracy movement.

In their efforts for starting a war with Iran, or impose crippling sanctions on it, the Israel lobby and the neocons have been aided by two groups of Iranian exiles: the monarchists, and members and supporters of the Mojahedin-e Khalgh Organization (MKO), listed by the State

Department as a terrorist group. The monarchists are a relic of the past. They resemble the exiled Cuban community in South Florida, and even more closely the Russian Tsarists in Europe after the October 1917 Revolution, and still fantasize about returning to power, but have no base of support in Iran.

As a university student in Iran in the 1970s, I was an MKO supporter because it was active against the Shah of Iran, and have followed it ever since. The MKO had considerable support within Iran right after the 1979 Revolution. But, in June, 1981, it began a campaign of assassination that killed the moderate elements of the Iranian government and brought to power the fundamentalist and reactionary forces, who in turned executed thousands of MKO supporters.

The MKO was then forced into exile and moved its forces to Iraq at the height of Iran-Iraq war. It collaborated with Saddam Hussein's regime against the Iranian forces. The assassination campaign and the collaboration with the country's archenemy destroyed MKO's base of support within Iran. It is now a spent force.

Because the U.S. considers the MKO a terrorist organization, it is its political arm, National Council of Resistance (NCR), which carries out its political lobbying. One aim of the NCR has always been to present the Iranians in the Diaspora as strongly supportive of the MKO and its policy, imposing sanctions on Iran. But, the reality is very different.

The Iranian-American community numbers about a million and includes many highly educated professionals — doctors, lawyers, scientists and academics, and owners of successful businesses. Politically, it is divided into two groups.

One group — a very large majority — does not support sanctions or war. It does not, however, have access to means of mass communications. For a long time, its views were not heard publicly. In essence, it was "silent."

The second group — a very small but highly vocal minority — is made mostly of the monarchists and supporters and sympathizers of the MKO. It has considerable economic power, aided by many wealthy Iranian Jews that are strongly pro-monarchy and support Reza Pahlavi, the Shah's son and the monarchists' titular head.

This group controls the means of mass communications in the community — radio, and satellite TV — which it uses to broadcast Persian programs into Iran. It supported George W. Bush ardently, and opposes any rapprochement between the U.S. and Iran and, directly or indirectly, supports military attacks, or at the very least crippling sanctions, against Iran. Reza Pahlavi himself has advocated what he calls "selective sanctions."

But, the first group finally found a voice, when the National Iranian-American Council (NIAC) was formed in 2002. Led by its charismatic, articulate, and well-informed leader, Dr. Trita Parsi, NIAC has gradually become a strong voice of moderation, advocating diplomacy, rather than sanctions and war, with Iran. NIAC also condemned strongly the violent crackdown on the demonstrators in Iran after the June 12 election. The rise of the NIAC as a

moderate voice of reason has naturally worried the Israel lobby and the neocons, and their allies in the Iranian community, namely, the monarchists and the MKO. Thus, a campaign against it got underway.

First, the monarchist-controlled radio and satellite TV stations began to viciously attack NIAC and Parsi. This started at least three years ago. Even Parsi's public speeches were disrupted. For example, in February 2008 Amnesty International — not NIAC — organized an event in Los Angeles in order to establish better links with the Iranian community. Parsi was the featured speaker. But a mob stormed the lecture hall in order to thwart the event.

Who led the mob? The leaders were Hassan Daiouleslam who is now being sued by NIAC and Parsi for defamation, and a collaborator to whom I refer to as PM (I keep his name confidential for now). Daiouleslam has close links with the MKO. His brother and sister are both members of the MKO. He and PM have posted joint articles on the internet, attacking anyone who opposes sanctions and war with Iran.

In 2007 I debated Daiouleslam in a Voice of America TV program that is broadcast into Iran. During the debate he attacked all those who advocate diplomacy with Iran. After the program was over and we left the VOA studio together, I realized that he had a bodyguard with him. As is well-known in the Iranian community, only "important" figures among the monarchists and MKO are accompanied by bodyguards.

PM is a former communist who supposedly leads a small organization that is ostensibly active in the defense of human rights. But, the organization is essentially a website with a PO Box address. Its most important task is attacking those who oppose sanctions against Iran. For years PM has had close working relations with Kenneth R. Timmerman, the man who has made a career of being anti-Iran.

[Daniel Luban recently reported](#) that in an e-mail to Timmerman, Daiouleslam had said that he considers Parsi to be "the weakest part of the Iranian web" and that "destroying him will be the start of attacking the whole web" of what he and MP call the Islamic Republic lobbyists. I believe it was PM who put Daiouleslam in contact with Timmerman.

In 2007, Daiouleslam began posting long articles on the internet, supposedly analyzing articles written by those advocating diplomacy with Iran, in an attempt to demonstrate that they are the Islamic Republic's lobbyists in the United States. His articles were very well-researched, needing hundreds of hours of work. However, he would take statements out of context, or arbitrarily interpret what the article's authors had said, in order to prove his point.

I should know this, because he also did the same to an article of mine. In January 2006 [I co-authored an article with Shirin Ebadi](#), the 2003 Nobel Peace Laureate in which we argued that if Iran becomes a democracy, then its nuclear program will not be a concern, and that the Clinton administration did nothing to help Iran's former reformist president Mohammad Khatami. Daiouleslam claimed that we had said that Khatami failed because the Clinton administration did not help him, which is utter nonsense. Hence, his conclusion was that we were lobbyist for the Islamic Republic or at least its reformist faction at that time.

Even at that time, people in the Iranian community were wondering how Daiouleslam, who did not seem to hold any job, could afford spending huge amounts of time researching his articles. How was he supporting himself, or who was supporting him? The rife whisper was that he was being supported by the MKO, or its political arm, the NCR.

In an interview with Persian radio in Los Angeles in 2007, Daiouleslam attacked Parsi, and again accused him of being a lobbyist for the Islamic Republic. It was that interview that finally prompted the NIAC and Parsi to file a lawsuit against Daiouleslam.

Make no mistake. The campaign against NIAC and Parsi by the Israel lobby and the neocons, aided by Iranian monarchists and the MKO, is in fact a campaign to silent anyone and any group that opposes crippling sanctions and eventually war with Iran.