

U.S. Vote: Iran Indifferent to Democrats' Win

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Global Research, November 09, 2006
Adnkronos 9 November 2006

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Iranian policy makers and opinionists agreed on Thursday that the victory of the Democrats in US mid-term elections would not have an impact on the country's policy towards Iran and its handling of an international crisis over Iran's nuclear programme. Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani said Thursday on the eve of his departure to Moscow to discuss the standoff that "some believe the electoral victory of the Democrats will lead to a more intelligent stance towards us, but I am convinced that only perseverance in maintaining our position will force the West to accept our nuclear programme."

Larijani was also quoted by Iran's Fars news agency as saying that the Democrats' victory could however potentially "strengthen Europe's role in negotiations with the Islamic Republic."

Bush's Republican administration has so far put pressure on Western powers within the United Nations to approve sanctions against Tehran over its atomic programme which world powers fear is aimed at building nuclear weapons. Iran has repeatedly ignored calls to halt sensitive nuclear work, claiming it is solely for civilian use.

According to Mohsen Sazegara, the founder of the Iranian revolutionary guards corps, the Pasdaran, "the position of the Democrats on the Iranian nuclear issue is not so distant as that of the current administration."

"We should not forget that US Democrats have strongly condemned the statements of (Iranian president) Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Israel, and on the issue of sanctions against Iran are even more determined than the Republicans who have many economic interests in the Gulf area," he added.

Centre for Middle Eastern Studies of Rutgers University director Houshang Amir Ahmadi said he believes both US coalitions will "converge towards the centre," and moderate their positions after the mid-term election results. "There is no great difference between the two parties on foreign policy issues such as human rights, weapons of mass destruction, Iran's nuclear programme, terrorism and national security, on which their policies in fact converge," he added. "It's the different methods used to confront these issues that make the difference between Republicans and Democrats."

Ayatollah Mohajerani, the minister of culture and Islamic orientation under the first presidency of Mohammad Khatami, has welcomed the results and says he is "happy about the victory of the Democrats and the defeat of George Bush."

"These elections will oblige the current administration to act more carefully in the last two years of the presidential mandate and reduces the threat of a US military strike against the

Islamic Republic.”

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