

US Hawks Push Hardline Presidential Candidate in Iran

Ibrahim Raisi is expected to win the election; American regime change proponents have been cheering him for years.

By [Ryan Costello](#)

Global Research, June 21, 2021

[Responsible Statecraft](#) 18 June 2021

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#)

In-depth Report: [IRAN: THE NEXT WAR?](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the “Translate Website” drop down menu on the top banner of our home page (Desktop version).

Visit and follow us on Instagram at [@crg_globalresearch](#).

Before entering the Trump administration to serve as U.S. envoy to Venezuela and Iran, Elliott Abrams penned a revealing [essay](#) in May 2017, entitled “Why I’m Rooting for the Hardliner in Iran’s Elections: Two cheers for Ibrahim Raisi!”

Abrams was well aware of [Raisi’s bloody track record](#) as a judiciary official, where he was among the judges who oversaw the execution of thousands of political prisoners in the 1980s. Abrams was also well aware that a Raisi presidency could make him the apparent successor to the aging Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, which could have far-reaching consequences for decades to come.

However, Abrams’ support boiled down to his belief that Raisi represents “the true face of the Islamic Republic, while Rouhani is a façade.” According to Abrams, elevating a hardliner like Raisi would bring the Islamic Republic closer to collapse and provide a “clearer view” of the nature of the regime. Such an understanding would make it easier to advance the pressure policies that Abrams and his like-minded compatriots favored, regardless of their interlocutor in Iran and what could be achieved through diplomacy.

Abrams was far from alone in his belief. The Foundation for Defense of Democracies, the architect of Trump’s maximum pressure policies, published a [memo](#) for the Trump administration arguing that Iran was susceptible to “coerced democratization” and suggesting that the administration “work to prevent Rouhani’s reelection.” This dynamic was not new, either, as some U.S. hawks [revealed their preference](#) for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ahead of Iran’s notorious 2009 election.

Of course, Raisi was soundly defeated by the incumbent and relatively moderate President Hassan Rouhani four years ago, 57 to 38 percent. Amid high turnout, that outcome signaled continued support for international compromise, the lifting of sanctions, and promises of domestic reforms at home.

But what a difference four years, and a damaging U.S. pressure campaign, makes.

While Rouhani entered his second term with a mandate to pursue broader sanctions relief, U.S. hardliners promptly scuttled his prospects. At the urging of hawks like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo inside the Trump administration, and outside groups like FDD, Trump exited the nuclear deal that many Iranians had publicly celebrated just a few short years before. In the months that followed, sanctions increased to heights not even seen during the height of the Obama administration. Rouhani's moderation had been met with pressure, vindicating Rouhani's critics who had warned that the United States could never be trusted.

Now, Rouhani is set to leave office with little to show for his engagement, and people in Iran are desperate and disillusioned amid continuing repression, dramatic sanctions-induced inflation, and a devastating pandemic. Amid widespread voter apathy triggered in large part by the continuation of sanctions, Iran's leaders have [brazenly rigged the game](#) to the benefit of the candidate that U.S. and Iranian hardliners have actively rooted for: Ibrahim Raisi.

Now that the project of installing a hardline Iranian president with minimal voter participation is near complete, U.S. hawks will undoubtedly urge President Biden to finish what Trump started. Even in the face of [continual blowback](#) — on the nuclear issue, across the region, and for the people of Iran — direct military confrontation and the removal of the regime in Iran is the only outcome that will satisfy U.S. hawks.

As Abrams' essay shows, U.S. and Iranian opponents of diplomacy pursue mutually reinforcing policies. Raisi recovered from a decisive defeat in large part thanks to maximum pressure, vaulting to the top of powerful judiciary and, almost certainly, soon to the presidency while the people of Iran bore the brunt yet again of America's powerful sanctions. And, as Iran tips in a reactionary direction, U.S. hawks will find further justification to push even more escalatory policies.

President Biden has signaled a desire for a new approach and rightly invested significant energy in reviving the nuclear deal with Iran. But he also moved slowly, failed to take significant steps to open up humanitarian trade amid the pandemic and kept his predecessor's sanctions in place. Now, with Raisi's elevation, Biden's options narrow even further. He can continue his predecessor's pressure-only approach that decimated moderates, empowered Raisi and his fellow hardliners, and closed the door on broader diplomacy. Or he can restore the agreement Trump worked so hard to kill, ease the pressure on the people of Iran and restore some semblance of faith that diplomacy can deliver for each country. Only the latter has delivered any success — for both the United States and the people of Iran.

*

Note to readers: Please click the share buttons above or below. Follow us on Instagram, @crg_globalresearch. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Featured image is from lev radin via shutterstock.com



[The Globalization of War: America's "Long War" against Humanity](#)

Michel Chossudovsky

The "globalization of war" is a hegemonic project. Major military and covert intelligence operations are being undertaken simultaneously in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, Central Asia and the Far East. The U.S. military agenda combines both major theater operations as well as covert actions geared towards destabilizing sovereign states.

ISBN Number: 978-0-9737147-6-0

Year: 2015

Pages: 240 Pages

List Price: \$22.95

Special Price: \$15.00

[Click here to order.](#)

The original source of this article is [Responsible Statecraft](#)
Copyright © [Ryan Costello](#), [Responsible Statecraft](#), 2021

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Ryan Costello](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca
www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca